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**Narratives of innovation and resilience:  
Supporting student learning experiences in challenging times**



**Editors**

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## Narratives of innovation and resilience: Introduction

Lia Blaj-Ward<sup>1</sup>, Kristina Hultgren<sup>2</sup>, Ruth Arnold<sup>3</sup>, and Bella Reichard<sup>4</sup>

For international students around the world, 2020 was a year like no other. The very dream of travel and study in another country itself was threatened by a pandemic that spread across the globe resulting in travel restrictions, health lockdowns and grounded flights. Some students who had their cases packed to study in another country found themselves studying at home in another timezone. Others who had looked forward to gaining language skills through direct teaching and the ease of social interaction found themselves grappling with online education in their student accommodation. We all learned new vocabulary – Teams, Zoom, break out rooms – as we attempted to take ourselves and our students Off Mute.

Of course, it wasn't only students who were affected. 2020 saw professionals in English for Academic Purposes themselves locked down, teaching from home from spare rooms or kitchen tables, and in the process undertaking an intense period of professional development as we learned in real time how online teaching and support could help us reach and sustain our students. Barely any aspect of our practice was unaffected as challenge drove our own innovation and learning.

Necessity is said to be the mother of invention. So what did we learn? And what do we want to retain and share with one another as the pandemic continues, and in the knowledge that international education may be permanently changed after the storm has passed? In the eight narratives included in this collection, colleagues from different UK universities generously share their experience of developing context-appropriate solutions in the early stages of the 2020 pandemic. They reflect on what they learnt from the experience and on what they themselves and others can take forward into future practice.

The initial call for contributions to *Narratives of Innovation and Resilience* invited a broad range of accounts of experience, from very specific and focused examples of practice (e.g., one activity, session or aspect of support) to solutions that had a large-scale remit. The narratives included here are an appropriate reflection of that range, and we are extremely grateful to the authors for offering up their experience to benefit other English for Academic

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<sup>3</sup> Study Group

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Purposes professionals. Insights gained from reflecting on experiences in the early stages of the pandemic will help build a strong foundation for sustainable future developments, as the creative and innovative solutions identified are highly relevant even in a non-pandemic situation, given the direction of travel of the higher education sector.

The higher education sector is accelerating the process of re-building curricula fit for the future (e.g., Coonan and Pratt-Adams, 2018; Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2020), and English for Academic Purposes needs to realign itself to a transformed academic landscape. Course delivery everywhere is being reframed in response to the geographically uneven evolution of a global pandemic (e.g., Maloney and Kim, 2020). Government strategies aimed at encouraging international student mobility linked to English-medium instruction are being implemented in uncertain environments (e.g., Baker, 2020). These strategies are foregrounding the need for international students to be supported to “make English their own along (yet unfinished) journeys of growing into confident language users and rounded professionals in fields that transgress national boundaries yet are fully sensitive to local contexts” (Blaj-Ward, 2017, p. 125). While the narratives originate in the UK context, they resonate with challenges and opportunities linked to the rise of English-medium instruction across the globe.

The first two narratives included in the collection focus on postgraduate dissertation writing workshops (University College London) and in-session provision (University of Bristol) respectively, both examples of interventions with immediate relevance for international students' academic success when UK higher education unexpectedly pivoted online in March 2020. The online writing workshops at University College London created opportunities for interaction, helped build a learning community and reduced the sense of isolation that students experienced when access to the physical campus was removed. For colleagues at the University of Bristol, online delivery of in-session academic language and literacy meant greater opportunities to integrate provision into degree courses, to enhance one-to-one tutorial experiences and to rethink how evidence is gathered to evaluate practice and gauge impact.

The third narrative places the spotlight on careers and employability for international students at Cardiff University. It reveals the complex layering of strategies and approaches put in place to complement and enhance the academic core of international students' experience in the UK. Appendix D contains a very powerful case study of personalised one-to-one support which helped the student successfully articulate, in an interview with a UK-based e-commerce company, the value of his academic learning.

The fourth contribution to the collection highlights the well-being, resilience-linked value of an Arts and Crafts channel that the University of Leeds' Language Zone developed in Microsoft Teams. As an extra-curricular activity, it facilitated dialogue and mutual support among more and less confident users of English from a range of different courses, enabled student and staff co-creation of activity material, and offered useful insights into the dynamics of online group interaction.

The fifth and sixth narratives take the reader back to the academic literacy classroom setting and explore experiences of facilitating resourceful student engagement with feedback on a foundation course (Teesside University, fifth narrative) and adjustments to practice within a small team at the University of the West of Scotland (sixth narrative) when they found themselves in an emergency remote teaching environment. This bridges discussion, in the seventh narrative, about induction and professional development on a newly-formed team of thirty-one summer pre-sessional tutors at the University of Leeds. Staff development is also the focus of the final narrative – an asynchronous “slow conference” organised at the same university. While the authors of the final narrative were not in a position to share evidence of impact on student learning, their experience offers a useful point of reference for colleagues wishing to organise similar professional development events, to enhance staff practice in ways that ultimately benefit student experiences and outcomes.

While each narrative conveys a unique, context-specific solution, there are several core threads running through the collection. One is the creation of learning communities. A swift and effective response to the challenge posed by the pandemic would not have been possible without close collaboration, reaching out and making new connections. Colleagues learnt from each other and from their students how to navigate the digital work and study environment.

The second thread is sustainability. To fulfil their critical mission and provide education for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDSN, 2020), universities need to integrate all aspects of sustainability in every single type of campus activity they support, both on their physical campuses and within their digital ones. To embed sustainability more fully within English for Academic Purposes, it is important that colleagues use their expertise to analyse communication in the full range of learning experiences on campus and work in partnership with students and colleagues across academic and professional services areas to develop formal and informal learning experiences. Collaborative working ensures that relevant expertise is developed and distributed in ways that allow sustainable implementation. The

#WeAreInternational campaign (<https://www.weareinternational.org.uk/>) is an excellent example in this respect: it draws on the expertise of colleagues in a wide range of university roles, it puts international students centre-stage, giving them ownership, and it ensures that relevant content will continue to be created – sustainably – as higher education experiences are transformed.

Impact – the third thread in the collection – is a complex issue, with resource implications in university contexts. The authors of the narratives were asked to consider the depth and relevance of learning that students had gained from the experiences narrated. They were also asked to make recommendations to other institutions that may wish to implement the initiative described. They were advised to accompany the recommendations with discussion of the main learning points for the team that designed and delivered the experience, so that the narrative could lead to further good practice and sustained impact. The narratives offer a range of evidence types and there is recognition that pre-pandemic approaches to feedback collection are in need of reframing so that they capture more fully the value of English for Academic Purposes provision: the personal, academic and professional value of the learning for students, for those who teach and support their learning, and the benefits accrued by the organisations and the communities which welcome international students on their university journeys and beyond.

International education and language learning have always addressed the challenge of moving beyond the familiar and out of our comfort zones as our students have not only grown their confidence and ability to use a foreign language but also adapted to a new world. This year English for Academic Purposes professionals have similarly found ourselves in unfamiliar territory, learning quickly and occasionally bewildered. Yet we have come a long way and learned an enormous amount together in this unforgettable year.

The accounts in this collection reflect a determination not to waste that experience but to grow from it for the sake of our students. The author John Le Carré wrote that learning a language is an act of friendship. By sharing their experience with others, these colleagues are generously helping us draw on their experiences and find our feet in a new world.

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## Learning how to build a learning community online

Ayanna Prevatt-Goldstein, Daphne Thomas and Ariane Smart  
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### Context

The impact of Covid-19 and lockdown in March 2020 had two interrelated consequences for learning and teaching at UCL. For learning, with the end of face-to-face teaching, the support normally available to students diminished at a time when postgraduate students write their end of year research projects and dissertations – already solitary exercises in themselves. This further disconnected students from their institution and their peers. For teaching, staff were expected to move all teaching online to ensure support for students was in place as soon as possible. Most teaching staff had no experience or expertise in fully online teaching, and had to rethink their approach entirely, learning new technologies and tools with little space to consider the pedagogic impact.

### *The UCL Academic Communication Centre (ACC)*

The role of the ACC is to develop and provide academic communication provision across UCL – a large and complex multi-faculty university with various approaches to supporting academic communication. We work closely with academic departments and faculties to develop discipline-relevant workshops, courses and tutorials, and we teach native English speakers and students with English as an additional language together. The ACC supports UCL research-based learner-centred education through the development of academic literacies and communication. We aim to help foster student autonomy, criticality and reflection, and to provide an inclusive safe space for students to practise, learn and collaborate.

In this short paper, we focus on the online provision we developed for taught postgraduates writing their dissertation or research project. This cohort was our main concern in the period April to July as undergraduate teaching had for the most part finished by this time and taught postgraduates were most affected by the changed learning environment as a result of Covid-19.

Our planned provision had consisted of stand-alone face-to-face workshops, accessed voluntarily by students, and had not been specifically designed to compensate for the loss of communal learning. The aim of this paper is to outline our experience of developing online

teaching to help reduce the isolation of our students, restore the social learning experience and facilitate learning in the conditions facing the sector.

### **Our response**

With campus closure in March 2020, we had to rethink our group teaching entirely. Through our initial teaching experience in this period and student feedback on our workshops, we began to appreciate the importance of developing learning communities. Our response was very much a collaborative effort, and the following initiatives that we describe are a result of the work of the whole ACC teaching team.

As we reflect on our response then, the report *Teaching online is different: Critical perspectives from the literature* by Ní Shé et al (2019) very much resonates with our experience. It has also served as an introduction to the literature on the community of inquiry model (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 1999) in which social, teaching and cognitive presence interact to create meaningful online educational experiences. There is evidence (such as in Dunlap and Lowenthal, 2018) that establishing a sense of learning community can help overcome some of the isolation students may feel when participating in online teaching, and as outlined above, this isolation was of course exacerbated by the circumstances of the pandemic.

### *Solutions identified: Design of provision to make learning effective and relevant*

In designing the format of our provision, we sought a balance between ease of access for students by offering stand-alone workshops, and continuity and depth of learning by making these stand-alone workshops a coherent series for those able to commit the necessary time. This meant that students could select to attend only a workshop on critical literature reviews for example, or all seven of the workshops which would take them through the key stages in the process of writing their dissertation or research project.

To make the content of our teaching as relevant as possible, we discussed the timing and content of these workshops with relevant staff in each faculty, including discussions with academic staff within departments on common challenges for their students. We also integrated samples of student work, assignment guidelines and marking criteria from the faculty. We designed workshops which allowed students space for reflection on their own work and application of the teaching to their own work. We recorded sessions so that students could access materials and review them in their own time. We also made these recordings available to all students, including those who had not attended the workshops.

The teaching team worked together to create lessons, trial them with each other and peer observe live lessons in order to review the content from both tutor and student perspective and make changes.

*Solutions identified: Design of provision to facilitate student interaction, reduce isolation and restore a sense of learning community*

We decided to offer these workshops live (synchronously) to increase institutional/teaching presence and facilitate a sense of learning community and help reduce student isolation. We clarified at the beginning of each workshop the expectations for engagement and participation. We designed the workshops to bring students together so they could share experiences and see that they often all struggle with similar issues, for example, we used breakout groups to offer a platform to students to talk about their research, check clarity, discuss marking criteria, and so on. We designed collaborative activities to encourage student interaction and promote social presence. We made use of a pre-task to provide shared material for group discussion and collaboration, in addition to workshop input, as well as ice-breaker activities to encourage engagement. We made use of various online tools such as hot questions, mentimeter, instant polls and “emoji reactions” to create opportunities for students to share ideas, raise concerns and give instant feedback.

Ní Shé et al. suggest that cognitive presence, a strand of the community of inquiry model, is concerned with “making meaning through continued conversation” (2019, p. 33). We hoped that the design of our workshops as a coherent series would allow for this continued conversation and depth of learning. While it is clear from the student feedback that for some this was indeed the case – they felt that they had attended a course which supported them in developing a greater understanding – overall the experience of our teaching team was that the structure of our provision did not sufficiently allow for this continued conversation and the deep learning that can result. We discuss this in the final section in the narrative.

### **Impact on students**

During the period May to July we offered 90 workshops on dissertation/research project writing for up to 25 students each. The impact on students is evidenced in the anonymous feedback we gathered following each workshop. 100% of those who completed the feedback found the workshops mostly or extremely useful, or useful for some things. 98% said that they would recommend the workshop to other students on their course. Due to the fact that the ACC had only been in operation for six months at this point and the provision was voluntarily accessed and in the format of stand-alone workshops, it is not possible to

contextualise the feedback. However, clearly the support was beneficial and it is in the free text feedback that we see the greater impact of the provision, especially in supporting resilience: students reported a renewed sense of feeling supported, the welcome opportunity to work and interact with peers, and increased motivation and engagement in adverse circumstances.

### *Relevance of learning / feeling of being supported in this learning*

The main benefits were that despite no longer being on campus, students were able to maintain contact and access tailored academic communication support while studying remotely. Students reported a greater clarity in what was expected of them: “I have learnt more about what is expected in academic scientific writing from these workshops in the past couple of weeks than I have from any of the assignment feedback on my course.” Students also reported that the greater clarity helped reduce stress and anxiety: “Doing a literature review for the first time can be very upsetting. This workshop helped me to understand it better and decrease the anxiety.” The workshops reinforced a connection back to UCL: “For those who feel lost it can be helpful... Having weekly sessions brings me ‘back to school’ in a sense.”

Students also appreciated having support that was relevant to their faculty and timed according to their journey: “It is very relevant to the stage I am at with my dissertation. It also helps provide a kind of focus to my dissertation which is currently quite difficult.”

The workshops encouraged concrete actions, and the feedback provided an insight into which steps students had identified and committed to taking at the end of the workshops. These actions included honing and justifying research questions and methodology choices, being more evaluative and critical (notably with the use of the literature and data), and considering audience, voice and contribution.

### *Sense of community and belonging / reducing isolation and stress*

Students reported that they appreciated the opportunity to work, participate and interact with peers as well as with their tutor, with a very positive response to breakout room discussions in particular. These allowed them to “reconnect with course mate[s],” something that proved valuable not only academically but also psychologically: bringing a “chance to speak to other students which is reassuring as we are all having the same experience and you might feel behind but when you speak to others you realise you are not. So very useful for knowledge, resources and also to relieve academic stress.”

Several mentioned the positive impact on their motivation: “I have been having difficulties being motivated to get my work done, and knowing that other students are also in this stage and the instructor telling us it is okay to do lots of outlines and brainstorming to visualize makes me feel a lot better.”

### *Engagement*

There were many comments appreciating the interactive nature of the workshops: “Very interactive and engaging, helps to focus attention,” “online and interactive session bring the subject matter to life much better than just a prompt sheet or books.”

As evidenced by the feedback, but also reported by the teaching team, there seemed to be space for more diverse forms of engagements: some commented favourably on “online interactivity” and the possibility to engage while remaining anonymous: “I liked the interactivity that you get from it being online. We can highlight and type text on slides which is fun and can see if people are in agreement or not (while still being anonymous!).” Others felt more at ease discussing in small groups compared to large ones, replicating typical class interactions: “I liked the mini-rooms we were placed into. It gave more opportunity to discuss as fewer people were present.”

### **Our learning**

Several pedagogic principles developed from our experience of offering this support:

- A learning community needs more than an online forum to emerge; social activities should facilitate the academic content but not displace it. Teaching needs to move from icebreakers to an academic focus reasonably quickly and include content that the students themselves recognise as relevant to their studies.
- Inclusivity is important. Some students will be uneasy talking about themselves in settings where one model or set of norms dominates. Fostering a safe space for students to share doubts, questions and uncertainties is imperative.
- A greater range of online tools, activities and different formats only partly addresses the question of student engagement. Some students did not interact, staying silent and off camera. One of the main issues raised in the feedback was with small breakout groups when some participants did not interact. This is more likely to happen when students do not have the opportunity to develop relationships with their peers and tutor over time.

As our adjustment moved from emergency to longer-term planning, we made the decision to offer our 2020-2021 postgraduate academic writing support online but in the form of closed six-week courses instead of open stand-alone workshops. The benefits of stand-alone workshops, such as ease of access and the opportunity for students to join only for the content which they felt was directly relevant to them, we felt were not sufficient to offset the loss of continuity for students and the teaching team. This is especially important in the context of online learning for students still largely off campus this academic year. We are hopeful that a course format will allow more time for student networks to form, for rapport (among students and between students and staff) to develop, for students to feel a deeper sense of commitment to their peers and safer to engage, and allow for a coherent narrative, including the integration of activities and learning *between* classes which is not possible with stand-alone workshops.

To help support the development of a community of learners, we are using OneNote as a virtual class notebook that participants on each course are invited to edit together, to respond to each other and the tutor leading the course. The tutor checks and responds regularly to questions and discussion here and there is opportunity to reinforce learning. Assignments are posted publicly for peer as well as tutor feedback. Course participants can be grouped for collaborative work according to their discipline, or to work with those from other disciplines where a sharing and contrasting of experiences would be useful. These small groups can be maintained where the group dynamic is effective. The week after the course finishes, we will run small group tutorials to offer further support as well as to help provide a springboard for a post-course learning community.

Since April we have learnt a lot in terms of the design of our online teaching. Our new format of a course, in place of stand-alone workshops, is intended to make possible increased social, teaching and cognitive presence in an online environment. We will be able to evaluate at the end of this term the extent to which this has been achieved – considering student and staff feedback and reflections – as we continue to develop our online teaching and learn how to build a learning community online.

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## **In-sessional EAP in the time of COVID: Adapting in-sessional EAP provision, delivering online tutorials and refining the course evaluation process**

Paul Hendrie and Neil Tibbetts

University of Bristol

### **Setting the scene**

The Academic Language and Literacy (ALL) provision at Bristol provides students with the linguistic and literacy tools to communicate more effectively within their specific disciplines. In the Centre for Academic Language and Development (CALD), our approach recognises that academic language “is nobody's mother tongue” (Bourdieu et al. 1994, p.8), ALL provides opportunities for any student to develop the quality of their communication within their subject irrespective of language background, existing skills or previous academic knowledge. ALL provision is offered in short non-credit bearing courses tailored to specific disciplines at undergraduate or postgraduate level across all six faculties of the university and developed through detailed consultations between schools and the ALL team. Timetables, schemes of work and activities are agreed with schools following close analysis of students’ needs. This needs analysis is based on Sloane and Porter’s (2010) CEM (contextualisation, embedding and mapping) model.

In ‘normal’ years, ALL provision is delivered via small-group, interactive classroom sessions held on campus. Students analyse and respond to texts from their discipline and develop awareness of textual and compositional features. These disciplinary texts include samples of student work, assignment briefs, marking criteria and tutor feedback from previous iterations of the students’ courses. Teaching materials are tailor-made, heavily informed by analysis of discourse within discipline specific texts.

When campus-based teaching was suspended in March 2020, many of ALL provisions at both undergraduate and postgraduate level still had sessions timetabled for the remainder of the academic year. We needed to decide how to proceed with this teaching and operationalise the sessions quickly. This required us to adapt materials to online delivery and review the pedagogy of the programme. Several provisions also included one-to-one tutorials, which were no longer able to take place on campus. Furthermore, our traditional

paper-based feedback collection process was no longer appropriate, yet we needed to collect student feedback to demonstrate the value of our provision.

We also needed to liaise with academic colleagues within the degree programmes, who were facing similar challenges. The changing circumstances and uncertainty about delivery increased the volume of communications with the contacts across the university with whom we were delivering the courses at this already busy time. These shared uncertainties created the need for conversations about how provision could be delivered and what we could do with the available technology.

The developing situation therefore posed three key questions about the delivery of our provision:

- How do we repurpose our provision for online delivery?
- How do we reinvent our student feedback and programme evaluation system?
- How do we maintain and deepen our connections with academics and their programmes whilst doing this?

### **Solutions identified**

#### *Developing new approaches to pedagogy*

In response to the new constraints on delivery we decided to blend asynchronous and synchronous elements to enable students to access content at their own pace and in their own time. We converted existing paper-based worksheets into PowerPoint presentations, and samples for analysis and instructions for activities were uploaded to Blackboard (VLE based) content.

During lockdown, it became clear that students had fewer opportunities in their courses to interact with each other, and that our ALL sessions had an added value as a 'third space' for them to share experiences and provide vital support to each other. This also suggested the value of a more 'open' approach to the provision: enabling students to select from activities available on Blackboard as well as the order in which they were addressed. We also allowed students to select the focus of their learning in breakout rooms and discussion activities. This approach allowed greater differentiation and a wider range of modalities for learning.

Changing the format of materials from paper worksheets to downloadable online resources, we found that they were sometimes shared more widely between students: we even received emails from students requesting access to content on literature reviews which had been designed for students outside of their programme.

### *Revising tutorial procedures*

Several ALL provisions included plans for one-to-one tutorials, which had usually been delivered face-to-face on campus. Typically, before the tutorial, the student submits written work by email which the EAP teacher then reviews, adding feedback on elements such as structure, criticality, use of sources and language choices. This feedback was previously provided on an annotated copy which was discussed at the tutorial session and given to the student for reference after the meeting.

We recognised that applications such as Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom were effective replacements for one-to-one communication, and we therefore invited each student who had been assigned an ALL tutorial to attend their session on Blackboard Collaborate. Delivering tutorials online appears to have been smoother than before and more accessible to students unfamiliar with our centre's location. We captured more tangible value of tutorials by providing a permanent record of the feedback as well as the discussion with the student. Recording the tutorial allowed us to send students an email following the session which included their written feedback, a link to the tutorial recording, and a link to a tutorial evaluation form. This was well received by students and has led to the adoption of a new standard of best practice or flow to our tutorial provision.

### *Connect with staff across faculties*

The increased uncertainty created more opportunities for communication with academic partners in the disciplines. Previously ALL sessions had been delivered in the classroom setting, meaning that they were not always perceived by students as being fully integrated in their substantive course. However, the new circumstances presented us with the opportunity to be embedded much more deeply in course provision. This was achieved by requesting that our sessions be hosted on the VLE of the courses and programmes in which they were embedded. We also delivered some joint online sessions with content tutors, allowing our in-session provision to become more seamlessly integrated into main course delivery.

As we became increasingly familiar with Blackboard Collaborate and other online tools, communications with our partners across the University indicated that they were not always progressing as quickly in adapting to online teaching platforms. We therefore offered small group workshops to teaching staff in other schools to train them how to use these online tools. With other staff, our connections with other University staff also enabled us to learn more about software they were using for teaching, such as Mural, Loom and Padlet.

As teaching staff were working from home, it was increasingly difficult to have short technical conversations, such as how to access a certain file or where to find saved recordings on Blackboard. We discovered that it can be faster and more useful to produce a short 1-2 minute screencast than to produce a detailed set of complex text instructions. We used tools such as Zoom, Loom, and the freely available Google widget 'screencastify' to produce these short videos and incorporated such videos into the academic year staff induction and teacher versions of materials for the next academic year.

### *Adapting course evaluation processes*

The move to online teaching meant we were no longer able to use our traditional evaluation system of a written form, completed by every student and collected after each session. In its place, we chose Microsoft Forms to capture evaluation data. A short template form was produced replicating the paper version. This included quantitative scores relating to the effectiveness of the teaching towards each learning outcome and a section with an open question allowing students to comment freely on their experience of the session, and which could then be used to generate qualitative feedback (see fig. 1 in 3.1. below). Previously paper forms had to be collated by teachers and results entered by administrators, which was both time consuming and prone to error. With online student evaluation, teachers could share the link to the form in the chatbox during the Collaborate session, and results are collated automatically. This approach allowed us to generate and instantly collate student responses, enabling a more accurate and smoother method of data collection.

## **Measuring impact**

### *Feedback on online sessions*

One of the first cohorts taught after lockdown were the PG students in the School of Veterinary Science. This session was taught via Blackboard Collaborate and constituted these students' first encounter with that platform and the breakout groups. This was also one of our first opportunities to employ our revised approach to evaluation.

Of the 40 students attending, 26 responded to the Microsoft Form. An indicative sample of their comments to the open questions is included in Figure 1.

What was useful?

'I really liked how we were put into smaller groups to discuss, thought that worked really well. The explanation and examples given really helped me understand critical analysis. The teacher was great and very engaging, thank you!'

'It was a good way to get thinking about my project and get feedback and talk with others in the class and get the ball rolling for me'

What could be improved?

'Some of the small group work was difficult to do as many of us haven't been able to think about our literature review topics yet due to changing our project topics last minute.'

'Maybe slightly larger group sizes, as was difficult in 3s when one person wasn't contributing'

Figure 1: Indicative comments from student evaluation form after postgraduate Vets session (April 2020)

The programme leader from the School of Veterinary Science also attended as she was curious about online teaching methodology. She provided us with the following testimonial:

'Last academic year, we got particularly good feedback from students. The ALL course took place just a few weeks after the national lockdown began. The ALL staff were already well ahead of us in terms online delivery. Not only did the session get excellent feedback from students, but I learnt an awful lot about running online sessions. I took away lots of tips and tools that I could use afterwards. In light of blended learning, the centre's offering is more useful than ever.'

Figure 2: Testimonial from programme leader for PG Veterinary Science (September 2020)

Quantitative data from student feedback from online taught sessions was similarly positive: Of the 26 respondents, at least 21 students rated the effectiveness of the teaching of each learning outcome at least 4 out of 5 (see Figure 3).

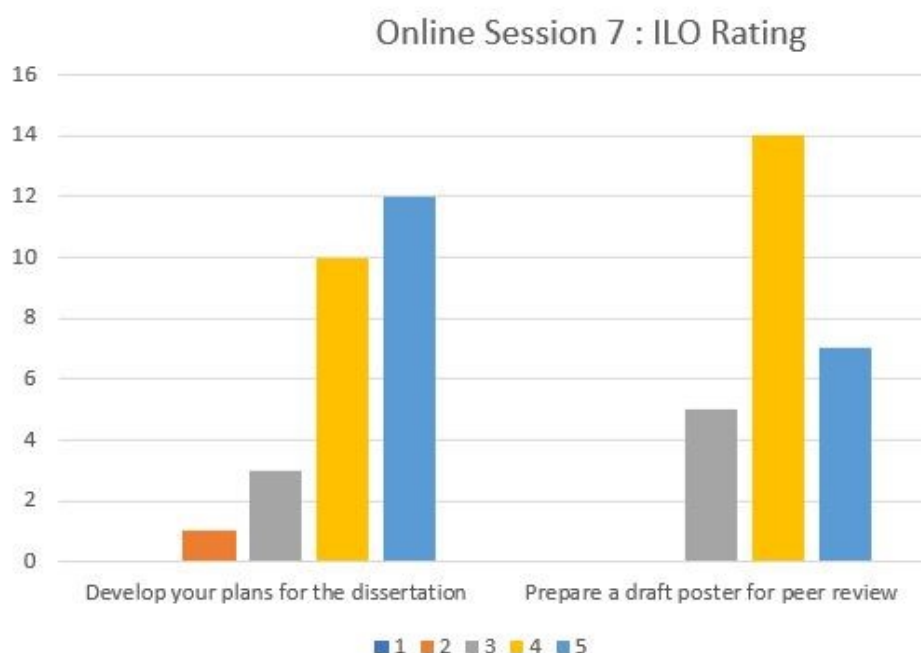


Figure 3: Results from an online student evaluation form (showing quantitative data related to learning aims and qualitative data from open answers) - PG Education Session 7 (June 2020)

From a student attending an alternative provision (PG ALL for Policy Studies), we received the following email. It shows the value of the online provision for students faced with challenging personal circumstances during the lockdown period (see Figure 4).

I just wanted to say thank you for the workshop on Friday. I've been out of academic for a long time and have spent the last month going round in circles trying to write my lit review but not knowing how to do it (not helped by having to home-school my kids during the week!). I listened to your managing your reading PowerPoint on Friday morning and that together with the workshop in the afternoon have completely changed the way I'm working. I've now got a spreadsheet, note cards for each article and am writing a mindmap for each section. I've now written a draft of one section (out of 4) and have a mindmap done for another! (PG Policy Studies)

Figure 4: Email from a PG Policy studies student following an online ALL session (June 2020)

This feedback also demonstrates the potential value of in-sessional EAP provision such as ALL to contribute to how universities enable widening participation.

### *Feedback on online tutorials*

The online tutorials were very well received by the students. Examples of student feedback from students on the MSc in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Public Health, and the Year 1 Engineering Design programme is provided in Figure 5.

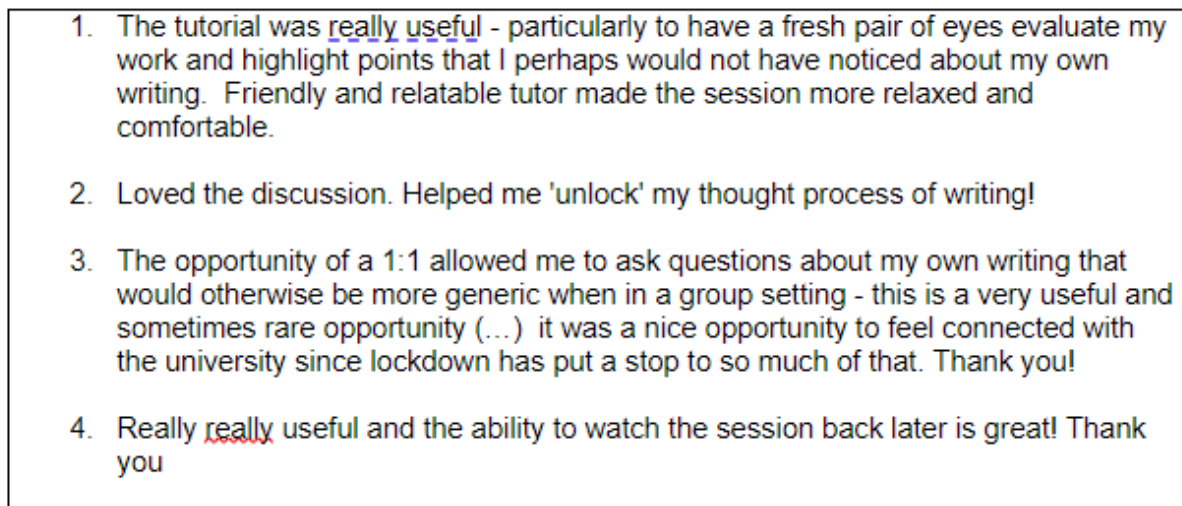
- 
1. The tutorial was really useful - particularly to have a fresh pair of eyes evaluate my work and highlight points that I perhaps would not have noticed about my own writing. Friendly and relatable tutor made the session more relaxed and comfortable.
  2. Loved the discussion. Helped me 'unlock' my thought process of writing!
  3. The opportunity of a 1:1 allowed me to ask questions about my own writing that would otherwise be more generic when in a group setting - this is a very useful and sometimes rare opportunity (...) it was a nice opportunity to feel connected with the university since lockdown has put a stop to so much of that. Thank you!
  4. Really ~~really~~ useful and the ability to watch the session back later is great! Thank you

Figure 5: Student feedback on online tutorials (PG NPAPH 1-3, UG ENG Design 4)

The feedback above demonstrates the added value of the ALL tutorials, the importance of a smooth flow to the tutorial process and the overall effectiveness of holding them online and how this contributed to enhancing student experience at this difficult time.

### *Feedback from university staff on Collaborate training sessions*

Following our increasing familiarity with the functionality of Blackboard Collaborate, we reached out to university contacts in April to offer practical workshops in how to use this platform effectively. The aim was to share learning and provide an opportunity for colleagues to discuss online pedagogy while practising the use of this new tool. At the request of the staff from the school of Education and the department of Mechanical Engineering, we then delivered 2 practical sessions of 1 hour to 14 colleagues. Feedback was collected from these attendees. Of the 5 respondents, all gave the session 5 stars for effectiveness. Qualitative feedback is included in Figure 6.



What was useful?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tips on pedagogy</li> <li>• Playing around with the tools, discussing with colleagues</li> <li>• Really informative and great the way you set it up so that we were able to practice during the session.</li> <li>• exploring the different tools - especially the breakout rooms</li> <li>• Everything! Practicing and being able to ask questions live</li> </ul>
What could be improved?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep doing it the same way - the casual, time for conversation</li> <li>• Nothing - a <u>really good</u> intro with not too much information overload</li> <li>• Would be useful to know how to set the time for the breakouts? I wasn't clear on how to achieve that even though it was discussed</li> <li>• Not sure - I am thinking about designing sessions that are asynchronous due to international cohort...</li> <li>• Longer session with more time to play (though this is clearly dependent on colleagues)</li> </ul>

Figure 6: Qualitative feedback

## Recommendations

Uncertainties around lockdown and its implications for teaching can allow for broader conversations with departmental partners. There are many small experiments taking place across universities, and the environment may present opportunities to explore team teaching, make short guest appearances in sessions, and exchange knowledge across faculties. Expertise in pedagogy and willingness to share ideas and practices can be highly valued by colleagues.

Delivering 1-1 tutorials online allows their value to be captured in a video recording for the student. This can then be emailed to the student with the written feedback and a link to an evaluation form. This approach appeared to be an improvement on the process we had used before as it captured the value of the tutorial in new ways. The student feedback on these tutorials also shows their value. Interestingly, it is also anecdotally reported by tutors that students activated their cameras in almost all the 1-1 sessions. This approach to managing tutorials may be sustained even after lockdown is lifted.

Collecting student feedback online via Microsoft Forms may be more sustainable than paper-based solutions. The automatic collation can save many hours which would otherwise be used on admin and data entry. However, we have found that the response rate of online evaluation form completion has been lower, and tutors may not always remember to post the link and ask students to complete them.



### Reflection

The core purpose of the ALL provision and its theoretical underpinnings remain unchanged, but the exploration of new ways to deliver the provision have brought some important insights.

One initial concern when planning the online teaching was how to maintain the 'Meddler in the middle' teaching approach (McWilliam, 2009) which characterises ALL and the teaching approach of CALD in general. Such an approach involves promoting criticality by 'interfering' strategically and purposefully in students' interactions. The design of activities in the first lockdown period was deliberately more fluid and open, drawing on students' responses to flipped activities to be guided by their needs in an uncertain period. It will be interesting to see where this may take us pedagogically in the future. Our experiments with trying to allow more student choice within the course might even be considered a tentative step toward incorporating an element of 'open educational practice' (Elhers, 2011).

It is clear from the evidence above that we had positive feedback from both students and lecturers. It would also appear that our evaluation systems have transferred well online. It might be that the manner of collection in a more private way encouraged more personalized feedback, as seen in the examples of qualitative data in section 3 above, than paper forms collected by the teacher. This development may allow a deeper understanding of how our courses enhance student experience at university in a variety of ways. However, with online data collection, guaranteeing an effective level of response is a vital issue to address going forward.

Perhaps the most significant result of our experience of the lockdown period relates to developments with our relationships with course lecturers and our role within the wider context of teaching at institutional level. The ALL provision has always aimed to integrate into the teaching of each programme, and is therefore contextualised, embedded and mapped. (Sloan and Porter, 2010). Changes in programme delivery across the university in this context created opportunities for further communication with the department to ensure that content was even more firmly embedded. Potentially, the developing role of our department and ourselves as practitioners within the institution, contributing to the development of teaching practice at institutional level (as evidenced by our experiences above) is exemplifying the kind of approach to EAP that Wingate (2015) endorses, in terms of becoming established 'literacy experts' within the university. It is to be hoped that a more

visible presence for our courses and developing stronger relationships and closer working practices with other departments means that truly embedded EAP will be the best result of 2020.

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## Working in partnership to develop an innovative careers and employability offer

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### Institutional context

When the UK went into lockdown due to the emerging Covid-19 situation, we at Careers & Employability at Cardiff University were presented with the challenge of continuing to offer 'business as usual' services in new formats and providing our students with timely information, advice, and guidance relevant to the new climate and changing labour market. Cardiff University is a city university spread across two main campus areas. We are a member of the Russell Group and are 5<sup>th</sup> in the UK for research (based on the 2014 REF exercise). We have a student population of c. 33,000, c. 9,000 of whom are postgraduates and c. 8,500 of whom are international students – with a large contingent of the international cohort being based in the Business School. In terms of the Graduate Outcomes 2017/18 data, we are ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> of 138 UK HE institutions and are the top university in Wales for all graduates working in the UK in highly skilled employment. Our overarching institutional strategy is called The Way Forward and it comprises three thematic sub-strategies that align to apposite Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) roles, the one that pertains to us being led by the PVC Education and Students.

In support of our work we have developed a close working relationship with the fairly new post of University Dean for Employability and have established Employability Networks in each of our three academic Colleges (with an academic Employability Lead contact in each School/Department, of which there are between seven and ten per College). We have a Business Partner per College that has oversight of the Service's delivery in their Schools/College and who also leads teams and thematic strands of work within Careers & Employability.

### The challenge

The main challenge being addressed by our innovative practice and delivery was the global Covid-19 pandemic. Our response needed to be two-fold:

- In the beginning, when all staff found themselves working from home literally overnight, we worked swiftly to ensure that all our business as usual offering was

accessible to students in an online format. This included reviewing the technological platforms available to us via University licences, considering the most accessible approach to all our students – wherever they were in the world – and then devising clear communications to ensure our Service was visible and easy to engage with.

- After the initial response, and as the situation changed and developed on an almost daily basis, we realised that we would need to continue to be adaptive and innovative in order to respond to immediate pressures but also to the emerging ‘new normal’, recognising that things may have irrevocably changed. The whole sector is implementing significant changes to education delivery (with the move to blended learning), the curriculum itself (to keep abreast of societal and industry changes), as well as offering a modified broader student experience. These are all things we knew we would need to be cognisant of and respond to in order to stay relevant.

### **The solution identified**

We are a large Service comprised of several teams leading on different aspects of our delivery. Working together, we identified various solutions to the challenge of keeping students and graduates informed and engaged as we all navigated the emerging pandemic situation. We:

- Moved all our 1:1 appointments and workshop provision online, utilising University-approved and licensed platforms (Teams, Skype and Blackboard Collaborate). Colleagues worked quickly to upskill themselves by attending training sessions we organised and using training materials we provided.
- Developed a whole new section called ‘Our Services During Covid-19’ on our well-established online learning platform, *Your Career Journey* (YCY, hosted by external provider Potential.ly but populated with content developed by us). The resource was researched and written by various colleagues in the Service who worked efficiently to research, share information and expertise, and to co-author content, including top tips on navigating lockdown, bite-sized employer input, case studies and interactive quizzes.
- Devised a ‘Class of 2020’ graduate campaign, comprising a varied programme of online workshops on all careers-related topics and UK/international employer-led webinars to help home and international students navigate the changed labour market and develop their skills. These were advertised in new interactive online brochures, making excellent use of a program called Genial.ly that we subscribe to to create interactive infographics.
- Introduced a range of new work experience opportunities, including:

## Narratives of innovation and resilience

- Converted over 100 extra-curricular placements into virtual ones.
  - Introduced 'On-Campus Insights'; short-term, unpaid placements within the University across a wide range of departments.
  - Introduced new 'Career Mentoring' (in conjunction with the University's Development and Alumni Relations department) and 'Student Consultancy Project' programmes, launching this semester. Please see Appendices A and B for more information.
  - Created an FAQ for all aspects of placements provision and kept in close contact with colleagues throughout the institution to ensure we were sharing information.
- Our Enterprise team altered their 'Ymlaen' (Welsh for 'Onwards') scheme to become a remote experience by replacing office space access with digital resource packages. See Appendix C for more information.
- Launched a new student-led podcast called 'My Career in Lockdown' (available on Spotify and Apple) to provide the Student Voice perspective. This was developed by two 2020 graduates in Journalism, working closely with our Communications Manager and a Careers Adviser.
- Kept students up to date with all new developments via communications co-produced by us and the central University Comms team; these included online articles, social media content, and email campaigns to academic College networks, as well as any other School-level channels available to us. We simplified our messaging to present a streamlined offer, updating our intranet pages by incorporating student feedback on the structure/content.
- Liaised with academic colleagues to adapt School-specific delivery for online and/or blended learning throughout the next academic year. This has resulted in a real mix of synchronous and asynchronous delivery, and we have encouraged all student-facing staff delivering in Schools to link in to the University's wider Digital Education Strategy and attend training sessions to upskill themselves in relation to digital delivery. Four Advice & Guidance colleagues will undertake the University's Learn to Teach programme this year, culminating in applications to become an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. This investment in our colleagues will increase our curricular credibility and futureproof our delivery, as well as offer a rewarding experience to participants.
- Introduced CareerSet, an online Artificial Intelligence-based CV checking tool that supplies students with almost instant feedback on their submissions. We also signposted to our Shortlist.Me subscription, a site that offers students the opportunity to practise online and video recruitment.

- Worked with University colleagues in Planning and Alumni Relations to devise an Exit Survey for all graduating students, highlighting our ongoing provision (for two years post-graduation). 741 students responded and we provided follow-up support in the form of 1:1 guidance appointments, suggesting appropriate sessions and of course highlighting our online resources. We hope to repeat this exercise in future years.
- Developed a new resource for academic Personal Tutors, comprising a 'map' infographic and a series of scenario exercises. This formed part of a wider relaunch of resources by the PVC Education and Students and we are planning complementary communications to academics this coming semester.

### **Impact on the students**

We use a range of data and a combination of student, graduate, employer and staff feedback to review our delivery and engagement on a regular basis, ensuring that interacting with our services always moves the student forward in some way.

Key overall statistics relating to engagement during Lockdown (March to September 2020)

- Early indications of engagement data for the whole 2019-2020 academic year (which we are still collating/digesting) are that our engagement has remained stable compared to the previous year, despite myriad challenges and obstacles.
- Since March 2020, there have been over 900 new registrations on YCJ.
- We placed 225 students into virtual work experience placements in lockdown, including converting over 100 extra-curricular placements into virtual ones.
- We had 450 plays of our podcast, with a 60-70% retention rate (i.e. they listened to the whole episode); this is high by industry standards. It has a five-star rating on Apple.

Key statistics relating to our international cohort

- Unique page views of the International Student resource section on YCJ were at 712, evidencing the fact that students were seeking advice and information from that resource.
- We delivered a session to all pre-sessional English Language Programme (ELP) international students to ensure they were still able to access vital employability advice despite not yet being in Cardiff. We intend to work more closely with the ELP team this coming year to ensure as much continuity between different stages as possible. Pre-sessional awareness-building to encourage early and continued

engagement is really important; it's good for us to be able to introduce our Service to students before they are bombarded with information in Freshers' Week.

- Compared to 2019 figures for the same period, the numbers of international students accessing the following services either remained stable or increased: Business Mentor meetings, careers guidance appointments, Advisers' e-guidance, and mock interviews.
- A total of 65 international students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) from a wide range of Schools completed virtual work experience placements.
- Recent graduates from 23 different countries undertook our virtual placements.
- We delivered over 60 UK and international employer webinars. A total of 358 international students booked onto the webinars, including 43 bookings for our Decathlon China webinar, run in conjunction with the Great Western 4 (GW4) alliance members, the Universities of Bath, Bristol and Exeter.

These statistics show that despite the impact of a global pandemic, which threw students' curricular experience into disarray and disrupted all student support services, our engagement has remained stable and even increased in some areas.

### International student case studies

- Prateeksha Pathak, who joined our Enterprise 'Ymlaen' scheme during lockdown, is [developing a virtual museum](#) and has recently been interviewed for a Creative Cardiff podcast, which will be released later this Autumn.
- Macy Quinn-Sears, studying BA Journalism, Communications and Politics, completed a content creation Remote Santander Paid Internship with Heads Above The Waves. Macy created content for their blog, website, and physical flyers. She gained a lot from the opportunity, including industry experience and enhanced communication skills, and would "...100% recommend students at any stage of university complete work experience."
- Lachlan Bramley, studying MSc Business Management, took part in a Student Consultancy opportunity researching and presenting on how Cardiff Council could support communities during the pandemic. Lachlan said: *"I think pairing/grouping students together for projects works very well...I would definitely recommend this type of remote work, especially while we are still living in these COVID times where work experience can be difficult to come by. Thank you CU Careers and Employability."*

- A Business School postgraduate student accessed a wide range of our support, including: virtual mock interviews, multiple 'Class of 2020' sessions, our virtual Careers Cafe and both UK and international employer webinars. Read more about him in Appendix D.

### Recommendations

In summary, we would encourage colleagues to devise new/revised formats in response to the changing student experience and external environment, really focusing on how to add value in the current situation.

- Adapt business as usual services to new formats, making use of the technology available, monitoring engagement and encouraging feedback from students to inform changes. For us this meant consulting service users, the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers, representatives on Staff-Student Panels in Schools, student interns and Cardiff (employability) Award participants for their thoughts.
- Work in partnership with academic colleagues to identify where you can add value to the teaching and learning provision in Schools/departments, being mindful of any overarching institutional strategies. For us this meant working in congruence with the University's Digital Education Strategy to ensure our offering aligned with pan-University plans (for instance, in terms of delivery modes), and also being mindful of the needs and challenges in individual Schools (e.g. in terms of the balance between synchronous and asynchronous provision, changes in the sectors most related to their subject discipline, and any emerging subject-specific resource needs).
- Work in partnership with industry colleagues to review and restructure your traditional Employer Engagement offer to reflect the online approach. We have introduced week-long sector showcases comprising employer webinars, skills sessions, large employer showcases (alternatives to Careers Fairs), recruitment process Q&As, dedicated student comms, events, and resources. We will seek to enthuse academic colleagues and link in with curricular sessions where appropriate, as well as utilise alumni links around the globe to gain insights into other labour markets, and to secure speakers and mentors.
- Work in partnership with other universities to maximise student opportunities: For us this involves collaborating with the GW4, colleagues in the various (professional body) AGCAS (The Association of Graduate Advisory Careers Services) Task Groups we are represented on, and taking part in ISE (Institute of Student Employers) research.



- Anticipate what students need support with in this changed labour market. Our responses have included On-campus Insights, and the Career Mentoring and Student Consultancy Project programmes – initiatives that will genuinely prepare students.
- Invest in or foreground the promotion of apposite resources to meet students' current and emerging needs. For us this meant:
  - Investing in CareerSet, an online AI-enabled CV reviewing tool that enriches the student experience by offering instant formative feedback and frees up staff time to spend on more value-added activities such as 1:1 appointments.
  - Investing in a programme called Genial.ly, with which we can create interactive infographics to present information in a more engaging way.
  - Increasing the prominence and promotion of our existing resource Shortlist.Me to encourage students to practice online interviewing – a now commonplace feature of recruitment that graduates must be prepared for. The resources can be tailored to different cohorts/industries/job or study levels.
  - Trying podcasting, ensuring the Student Voice was prominent to make it relatable. We are going to continue to develop podcasts as it is such an engaging format.

### Learning Points

- Our students are happy to engage with our virtual format Service offer.
- Increased online provision allows the student to take control over their learning, accessing content on a flexible basis and enabling them to chart their own course through our resources. Putting the effort into digital resources is worth it.
- It is essential to work in partnership with academics on our provision to ensure applicability and buy-in/academic endorsement, which we know is so effective.
- Feedback from our Disability and Dyslexia team is that students have found our online content increasingly accessible and well-structured.
- There is much modified provision that we would seek to retain, going forward. Examples of this include virtual appointments offered at extended hours, our online CV reviewer tool, and the use of recorded sessions as 'evergreen' resources to build up resources available on a 24/7 basis, minimise repetition and divert resources to new value-adding initiatives.
- Offering remote work experience was significantly easier to manage logistically, allowing for more scalability. Student feedback has been so positive that we intend to maintain the remote version of our scheme even when it becomes possible to reintroduce the physical option. One piece of feedback has been that a remote

placement is a less intimidating introduction to work experience than a face-to-face one, offering a manageable first step. We can utilise insights such as that to nuance our marketing and communications to appeal to more students.

- It's important to engender shared ownership of the student engagement challenge and encourage staff to engage in local, national and international networks and feed into discussions on how to move forward. We made great use of OneDrive as a collaboration tool to work on plans and resources, and then encouraged staff members to add banners to their email signature and take an active role in promotion. Cross-selling is key for us.
- Simplify your messaging and use all possible channels wisely, tailoring content where appropriate (e.g. for new graduates or international students) and encouraging as much academic endorsement as possible. For us these include University central communications, the International Student Support office communications, social media, academic College networks, and other School-level channels such as weekly newsletters.

### **A closing section**

We are a data-driven Service where horizon-scanning is encouraged so that we are able to respond effectively to developments and insights (e.g. from industry contacts, academic colleagues and AGCAS), but also interpret these sources and anticipate where we might proactively introduce initiatives to add value to the student experience. Sharing and citing research to ensure our provision is current and fit-for-purpose is important to us.

Key sources we have used in the past few months to inform our practice are:

Prospects Luminate articles (<https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/>)

- <https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/survey-reveals-students-concerns-amid-coronavirus-crisis> Gave us a timely insight into how continuing students were feeling that informed our comms and messaging, ensuring we struck a balance between reflecting the reality of the situation and remaining encouraging and supportive.
- <https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/navigating-the-storm-the-role-of-careers-services-during-a-pandemic> Gave us insights to inform the design of our revised work experience offering, validated our maintenance of close links with our employer contacts, and gave us food for thought in the development of new graduate provision (the YCJ 'Our Services During Covid-19' resource and the Class of 2020 campaign).

- Charlie Ball's updates: <https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/uk-graduate-labour-market-update-7-july> Gave us invaluable insights into the changing graduate labour market to enable us to nuance our provision and cite very recent sources in our delivery.

ISE data and reports (<https://ise.org.uk/page/isepublications>)

- [https://cdn.ymaws.com/ise.org.uk/resource/collection/78C3D824-D17B-4316-8E69-15A054E40F1E/Covid-19-international\\_final.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/ise.org.uk/resource/collection/78C3D824-D17B-4316-8E69-15A054E40F1E/Covid-19-international_final.pdf) Reports such as this one gave us live data mined from local, national and global employers that we were able to interpret to inform our offering. We were also able to relay information from the recent research to our students in order to evidence our expertise and our ability to keep pace with labour market changes and advise students accordingly.

The WonkHE digest (<https://wonkhe.com/>)

- Many colleagues receive the weekly WonkHE digests that provides context for the whole HE sector, allowing us to understand the issues concerning all our stakeholders (our academic colleagues in particular) and really consider where we could be supportive and add value.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: The Career Mentoring Scheme**

Be matched with an **experienced professional** to gain insight into a sector or industry, to build on your professional network and to develop your confidence in your career choices.

- Applications close at the end of November.
- Mentoring takes place between **January – April**.
- You will commit to a minimum of **6 meetings** during this time. (Each **1 hour in duration**)

This structured pathway will guide you through **6 online employability sessions** to help you to

have some great conversations with your mentor.

This scheme is a brilliant way to gain **insight into your future career choices from somebody with first-hand experience and knowledge**, over a four-month period.

### **Appendix B: The Student Consultancy Project scheme**

#### **Student Consultancy Project**

Work in a **small team with other students** to solve a real-life, bespoke business problem and present your findings to the organisation.

- Use the Pathway to prepare for the project, log your hours, upload your final report, reflect on the experience and provide feedback.
- Set up **flexibly and remotely** to fit around your current time commitments (between 35 – 70 hours in duration).
- Apply **individually or as a team** with your course colleagues/friends.

Available in a broad range of businesses from start-ups to large organisations across the public, private and third sectors.

### **Appendix C: The Ymlaen scheme**

YMLAEN (pronounced Um-line) is Welsh for ONWARDS.

Over the last two years the YMLAEN scheme at Cardiff University has offered a package of resources to students who are working on a business idea. It included access to a professional co-working space, funding, and mentoring. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the normal scheme has been suspended.

We are pleased to offer an alternative package of resources for you to work on your business idea.

The package will consist of:

- Paid membership to IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed)
- Regular business mentor meetings
- A one-off payment of £150 to invest in your idea

The scheme is managed by the Enterprise & Start-up Team within the Careers & Employability department at Cardiff University. The scheme is supported by Big Ideas Wales as part of Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy 2019-2021.

**Appendix D: MSc Logistics and Operations Management Student 2019-20 case study, by one of our Business School Careers Advisers**

This student benefitted in many ways from our re-designed careers provision since the national lockdown in March 2020. By offering virtual one-to-one appointments, I was able to support him remotely with his job-hunting strategy and signpost him to our new online career resource 'Our Services During Covid-19', to provide him with useful job searching tools, updates on the current graduate labour market and access to our Class of 2020 virtual careers activities.

Through virtual appointments, I was also able to assist him in decision-making. The student had to choose between continuing to apply for jobs in the UK (his preferred location), or accepting job offers from two companies in his home country, China. This was a tough decision, as he faced fines for accepting a job in China and then turning it down at a later date, but with much discussion and careful consideration of his options, he decided to continue making applications to UK-based organisations.

Having reached the virtual interview stage with several UK companies in June, the student was able to book several mock interviews. Our online booking system made it possible for him to upload job descriptions in advance, to ensure that tailored, job-specific mock interviews could be designed. As these interviews were delivered through Zoom or Microsoft Teams, I was able to see the student from the employer's perspective and gave advice on posture, body language, interview environment and backdrops. He also needed to be encouraged to slow down his responses and take time to articulate his answers clearly, as the audio was sometimes distorted and voices harder to understand through web-based platforms.

Beyond our formal one-to-one appointments, the student connected with me on Microsoft Teams and was able to drop quick queries in the chat box function, which I could respond to promptly. He used this method to tell me he had secured a job with a UK e-commerce company and to ask about supporting paperwork required by the employer. I was able to signpost him to the relevant University departments for further assistance.

Below is a breakdown of the virtual career sessions and employer events that the student attended since March 2020:

**Virtual Careers Sessions**

July 2020 Class of 2020 - Virtual Careers Café

July 2020 Class of 2020 - Finding a Graduate Job or Internship

**Virtual Employer Events**

July 2020 - Graduate Opportunities with the Independent Monitoring Authority

June 2020 - Top Tips for a Career with Dyson Malaysia

June 2020 - Careers & Crisis: How to Navigate the Jobs Market Through Turbulent Times

June 2020 - Circle IT: Virtual Insight Event

June 2020 - How to ACE your CV with Amplify Trading, China

June 2020 - Preparing for Work – what skills and experience are employers looking for in new recruits and how should you present yourself in your application?

April 2020 - 'Flying Together Higher with Airbus' – for Chinese-speaking students

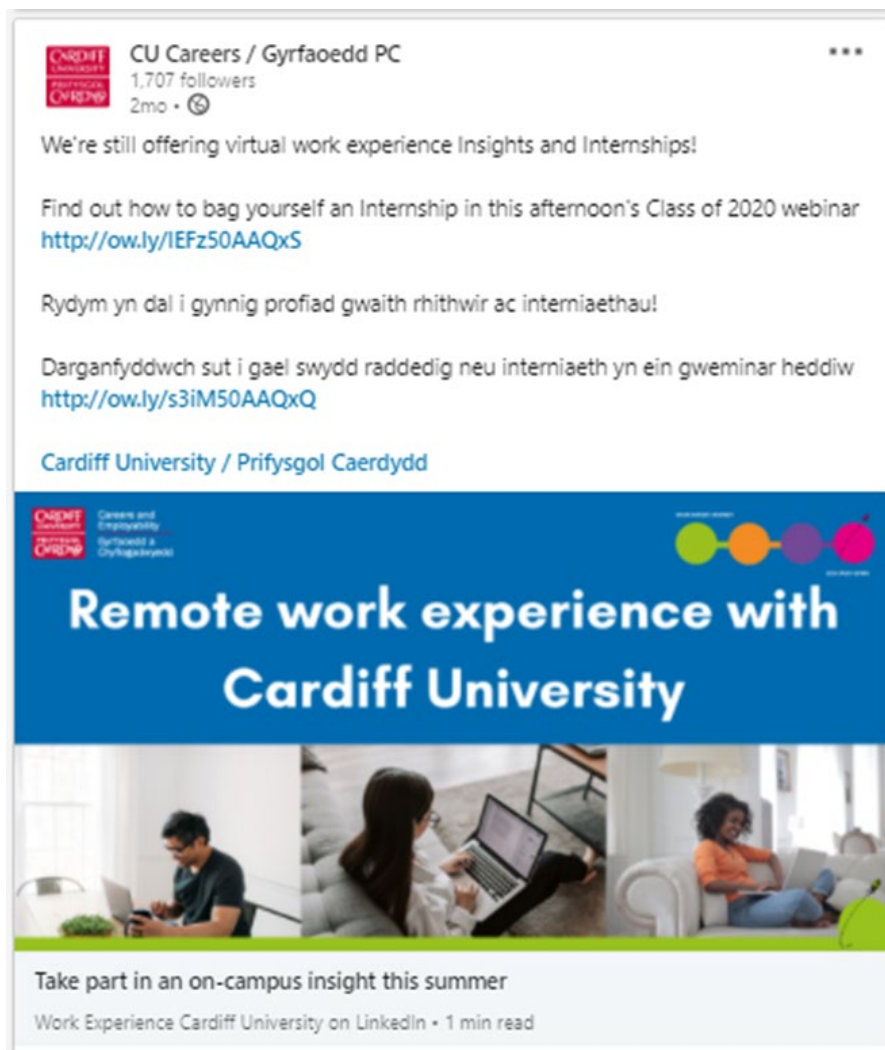
March 2020 - Dell Technologies webinar for international students

#### Quote from the student (17/10/20)

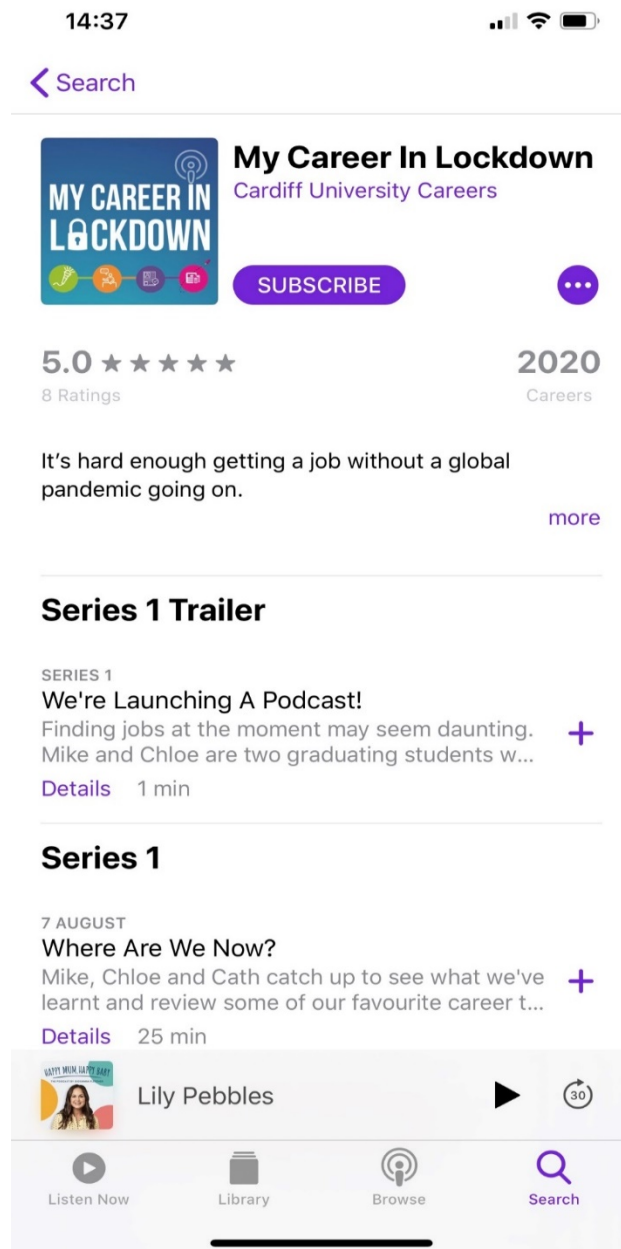
"The Careers and Employability team is amazing. With their professional support and advance, I finally got an offer of a Supply Chain Manager role from an e-commerce company. And Anna is a brilliant tutor; she always gives me useful and professional suggestions on job-searching and interview technique."

#### Appendix E: Screenshots of various communications relating to our provision

##### LinkedIn post about work experience



## Screenshot of a podcast search on Apple





### Video message from the Vice Chancellor to all international students

**Cardiff University** ✓  
20 March · 🌐

A message from the Vice-Chancellor to our international students  
"Thank you for your understanding, and we'll continue to support you."

Don't forget to:

- 📌 Check your inbox for an 📧 from the Vice-Chancellor
- 📌 Log in to SIMS. Let us know if you're staying in Cardiff
- 📌 Check Learning Central/📖 regularly
- 📌 Keep in touch with your School



**our international students**


0:11 / 2:03

 86

5 comments 29 shares




## Student endorsement and promotion of our sessions/Service on LinkedIn

**CU Careers / Gyrfaoedd PC**  
1,707 followers  
2mo • 🌐

Some more great feedback for our Class of 2020 webinars!

Book your space today: <https://bit.ly/2BEo8HD>

**Sarah Jane Harwood** • 2nd  
Graduate geneticist with an open mind  
2mo • Edited • 🌐

Today I listened to a webinar hosted by [Claire Bowen](#) and [Anna Murray](#) from [Cardiff University Careers Service](#) about articulating your skills and strengths in an interview. This covered the attributes that interviewers assess and the best methods of articulating a response to interview questions.

What attributes interviewers assess:

- MOTIVATION: Do you want the job?
- SKILLS: Can you do the job?
- PERSONALITY: Are you the right fit for the job?



How to articulate your response- STAR:



- ◆ Situation – Recount a specific event or situation.
- ◆ Task – State the goal you were working towards.
- ◆ Action – Outline the action you took to accomplish the goal, highlighting the skills you drew on
- ◆ Result – Describe the outcome of your actions and the positive impact it had

Thank you [Cardiff University Careers Service](#) for providing continued support to Cardiff University students through this difficult economic time.

[#interviewquestions](#) [#interviewskills](#)

Link to the brochure for all our Autumn semester Employer Engagement activities on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/cu-careers-gyrfaoedd-pc/>


**CU Careers / Gyrfaoedd PC**  
1,707 followers  
2mo • 

**Bethan Emery** • 1st  
Employer Engagement Officer at Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd  
2mo • 

In response to continued social distancing measures for the next few months, we have taken the decision to deliver our regular employer engagement programme, virtually for Autumn 2020.

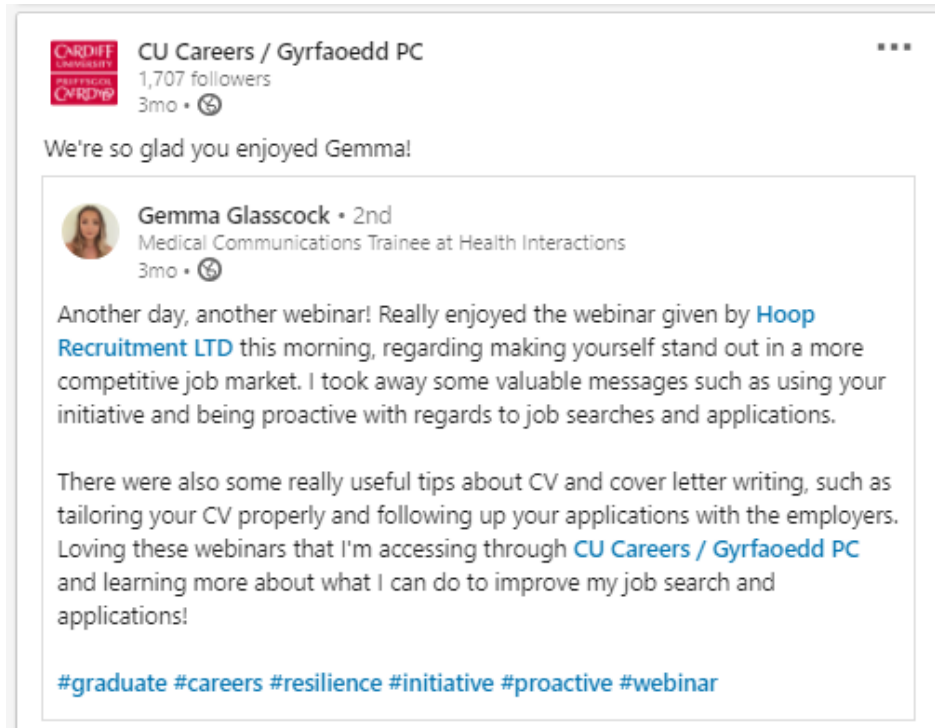
Read our brochure to find out how we are adapting and innovating our 'employer offer'.

If you have any questions, please do get in touch!

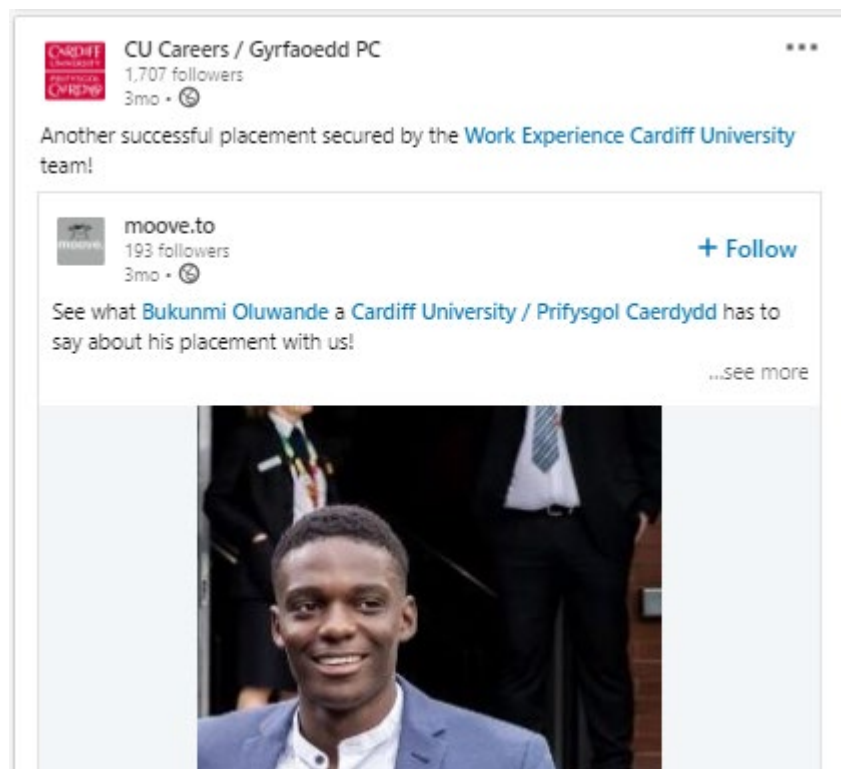


**Autumn 2020\_Employer engagement opportunities\_Eng.pdf**  
[drive.google.com](https://drive.google.com)


## Student endorsement and promotion of our sessions/Service on LinkedIn




## Student work experience case study on LinkedIn



**Infographic of upcoming Careers events built using Genial.ly and embedded in a LinkedIn post**

**CU Careers / Gyrfaoedd PC**  
1,707 followers  
3mo • Edited •

**Bethan Emery • 1st**  
Employer Engagement Officer at Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd  
3mo • Edited •


In a very short space of time, Covid-19 has had a huge impact on our day to day lives, education system, businesses and the UK and global economy.

Whether you are a student or just about to graduate, we know that you will have many concerns and questions about what impact this will have on recruitment and how this could affect your own career journey and job hunting.

The good news is that many recruiters are running online events to help students find out more about their graduate jobs and how to apply for opportunities during lockdown.

If you're a [Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd](#) student or graduate, check out what online events are taking place this week.

[#cardiffuniversity](#) [#cardiffstudents](#) [#cardiffgraduate](#)



**Upcoming CAREERS EVENTS**  
Open to all students

22 June +

23 June +

24 June +

25 June +

01 July +

**Upcoming Careers Events**  
[view.genial.ly](#)

## **Supporting extra-curricular language practice in on-line spaces: Crafting resilience through community building**

Jess Poole and Carolin Schneider

University of Leeds

### **Context**

Student engagement in academic and campus life and the integration of home and international students are strategic priorities for the Language Centre and wider University of Leeds context (University of Leeds, 2017). Our self-access centre, the Language Zone (LZ) is a key part of this strategy and actively contributes to the engagement practice for our students, who are learning English and other languages as part of their university studies or independently. It “aims to be a hub of language and intercultural learning for staff and students across the University by providing high quality resources, a social space and fostering and encouraging enthusiasm for language learning” (University of Leeds, 2020). These objectives are always important, but the Covid-19 pandemic has both heightened the need for and challenged our ability to do this. In this narrative we reflect on the creation of online spaces to support extra-curricular language practice and the extent to which this has enabled us to contribute positively towards student resilience.

The LZ works closely with the Leeds University Union (LUU), whose policy includes the importance of engaging international students (Leeds University Union, no date; Leeds University Union, 2019). We collaborate on extra-curricular activities that encourage Language Centre students to get involved with the opportunities offered by LUU. In this respect, the LZ acts as “a home between homes”, being a good place for those who may feel alienated from the wider University or “not yet ready” to immerse themselves in the large and busy campus life. Before the closure of the physical campus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LZ engaged learners through extra-curricular activities in a face-to-face setting. The challenge we wanted to address was to keep students engaged with these activities in order to continue to support well-being, and to build students’ confidence and resilience once teaching had fully moved online.

### **Creating an Arts and Crafts space to build student resilience and well-being**

Due to the isolating effect of the pandemic it was essential to create an online environment that incorporated the LZ’s strengths: human interaction, language advice, and resource

recommendations. Although we had established an LZ area on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), referring learners to good online resources and incorporating guidance created for specific purposes, we needed to find a more flexible platform. We wanted a way to simultaneously engage with students on a more individualised level, keep in touch with our existing language learning community and create a space where students could continue to interact with one another.

As the LZ team was already using Microsoft Teams to interact with each other, this appeared to be a good platform to work on. Students were encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas about the online spaces we were developing through online discussion forums and a survey. This confirmed our thoughts and gave us some further ideas to develop. We now use the software to provide a wide variety of asynchronous resources and activities and run synchronous sessions, such as information drop-ins, workshops and opportunities for conversation and speaking practice, based on pre-existing face-to-face provision/activities. The team delivers about three hours of synchronous activities every weekday, therefore offering more opportunities for engagement than before the pandemic. Students can further interact with the LZ platform 24/7. In contrast, when the LZ was open as a physical space, opening times were restricted to around 60 hours a week - excluding the online resources we already shared on our VLE (Schneider, 2020). Thus, the online setting allows us to offer more interactive sessions and also helps us better cater for students in different time zones.

Opportunities for speaking practice were created through themed channels on a wide variety of topics that were chosen to appeal to a range of learners. To illustrate in more detail how and why we carried out these synchronous sessions, we focus on the Arts and Crafts channel. This was a new addition to our suite of activities. Although we had experimented with this theme in the past, we had been constrained by the physical limitations of classroom space.

Studies (Sandmire et al., 2012; Stuckey and Nobel, 2010), suggest that engagement with arts and crafts activities can reduce anxiety and have positive impacts on mental wellbeing and invoke positive emotions, both of which may enhance resilience. Given our experience of using creative activities to enrich language learning (Poole, 2016) and the increased participation in Arts and Crafts in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Fairley, 2020), we speculated that crafting might prove a useful activity for students, something to offer light relief to the anxiety and isolating factors of the pandemic and a way to inspire meaningful and engaged language practice.

We discussed ways in which to differentiate the Arts and Crafts channel from existing provision by adding an asynchronous element through short, instructional videos. Colleagues created videos/slideshows on crafts they enjoy, such as scrapbooking and knitting. The aim of sharing this media in advance was to allow students to prepare for the session, whilst also giving them additional language practice. The open access of the Teams setting also means that students can choose if and when to watch the videos. In addition, it has provided us with a useful bank of learning materials that can be exploited for future learning activities. An example of one of these videos can be viewed here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hguFaoVnbgY>.

It soon became apparent that we should adopt a relaxed approach – i.e. make it clear to students that the crafting element was optional, and that they could have a go in the session, watch others crafting or just come along and chat about the topic without having watched the video. This approach allows participants to take part in an absorbing leisure activity at their own pace.

We were apprehensive that the amateur nature of some of the videos might make students perceive the sessions as trivial or irrelevant. It turns out that the DIY nature of the videos is part of what makes them attractive and has a kind of ‘levelling effect’ by showing that staff are not perfect nor ‘know everything’. In a way, our ad hoc approach has made the sessions more accessible and encourages students to play with both crafts and language. It has even inspired some students to create their own instructional materials and/or run their own sessions, to share the arts and crafts they enjoy. What we found was that these sessions evolved into something quite magical, garnering a genuinely enthused response from both students and staff.

### **Evidence of impact**

The beneficial impacts of this programme are varied and can be evidenced through participation levels, and through feedback from staff and students. Feedback from colleagues and student volunteers who got involved in delivering LZ activities has been very positive, with some commenting that they enjoyed working with students in this way even though they had not done anything similar before. Others noticed how running group sessions helped them to increase their confidence, both digitally and otherwise. Involving colleagues from other teams across the University has also had the unintended yet positive effect that more

people now know about the LZ and will refer students to us for language learning and intercultural engagement.

Student A's feedback is representative of the experience of many LZ users. We quote her in full because of the eloquent way she paints a picture of the lived experience of some of our international students:

The huge gains I have gained from Language Zone are self-evident. My schoolmates have seen a significant improvement in English skills in me, and I also feel that I speak English more confidently than before. In the early days when I joined Language Zone, honestly, I can't even control my breathe [sic] not to mention speaking English fluently due to the complex reasons including nervousness, fear, lack of self-confidence, worry about other people's patience with themselves, etc. [...] Fortunately, I met a group of respectable and lovely tutors and schoolmates in Language Zone. They are patient and they are really stars.

Another student points to the positive impact attending the sessions had on her well-being:

I had no [sic] many chances to speak to fluent English speaker if without session online during the lock down, I built confidence to speak in English via these activities, at least Im [sic] not afraid to talk with English speakers anymore. Language zone team gave me a lot of support during the hard time when I was stuck in the UK. They reduced some of my loneliness, I appreciated everything they did! (Student B)

The impacts on staff have been varied. During the summer term, Carolin encouraged the LZ team to run their own sessions and develop ideas of how to engage students. She made it clear that this would be a collaborative learning journey, during which we would learn with, and from, students, and that we could be honest about not knowing something or trying things out. This was both empowering but also at times daunting for staff, and certainly exacerbated by the isolation of working from home. As this member of Language Centre management and staff support team explains:

When Carolin first approached me to provide support with language zone activities I was immediately apprehensive, I didn't feel I possessed the level of confidence needed to talk with students about any topic for a whole hour, I wasn't even comfortable with the idea of using my webcam! [ .....]

During my time working with the language zone I have developed a rapport with many of the students; I have a greater understanding and appreciation of international cultures pushing myself to do something out of my comfort zone has really improved my level of confidence which may have been negatively impacted during the months of lockdown and isolation. [...] the lovely staff of the language zone [...] have been so passionate about retaining communication channels, especially during these isolating times of 'social distancing'. [...] the friendliness of the staff and students made me feel welcome which was key for me to continue doing the sessions.



## Recommendations and reflections

In order to enhance the positive aspects discussed above, we recommend offering additional training to staff involved in leading or contributing to the sessions, in particular to counter assistants and staff who may not have experience of leading these kind of sessions. Our own participation in the sessions suggests that enhanced training on how to ‘manage’ the conversational flow, (e.g. dealing with dominant speakers, being comfortable with silence and not feeling the need to fill the space) would be beneficial. Reflecting on and learning more about the dynamics of on-line group chat would enhance our ability to run these sessions more effectively.

Insights garnered from Spencer-Oatey, Dauber and Williams (2014) provide a useful lens to help us reflect on and further evaluate our provision. The paper illustrates how engagement in extra-curricular activities can have strong and positive effects on the creation of a student’s sense of purpose and a sense of belonging and is thus helpful in promoting well-being and resilience. This in turn can positively affect intercultural interaction and also, indirectly, have a positive effect on academic success (Spencer-Oatey, Dauber and Williams, 2014).

Our Art and Crafts sessions offer an example of how extra-curricular on-line provision can help build community by enabling students to connect with people beyond their course and offering the possibility of interaction with people of different nationalities. Our experience of these sessions chimes with Robertson and Vinebaum’s (2016, pp7-8) contention that “making things together helps to foster social bonds” by bringing people together, breaking social and cultural forms of isolation, and fostering dialogue, mutual support, and collaboration. Furthermore, these sessions have allowed us to create a ‘window of opportunity’ for co-creation of the curriculum by allowing students to suggest the session content, create learning material and lead activities (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2019). This has proved to be an important aspect in the creation of a sense of shared community, and thus we highly recommend making the student voice integral to the development of activities.

Further recommendations for those considering Arts and Crafts themed activities include:

- Use a mix of pre-existing materials, such as videos from external artists, and purposely created videos. This a) reduces the amount of content you need to create and b) offers a useful way to link to the wider community.
- Encourage “show and tell” to allow students to share their ideas and expertise in their target language.

- Give students the opportunity to lead sessions but have a backup available. (To help students do this successfully, offer training on the language used when talking about crafting.)
- Keep activities simple and embrace the DIY nature of amateur videos as input material.

We are aware that we benefit from a certain luxury of resources in our setting and that not all these recommendations will be achievable. Nevertheless, the basic concept is scalable and a smaller offering could still deliver many of the positive impacts we outline. For example, ideas for cheap or free activities can be found online or when looking at public library offerings (e.g. <https://www.cartoonmuseum.org/learning-resources>). For those institutions that lack a self-access centre we recommend developing links with student unions and student societies, as well as other university departments. Inviting other members of the university to participate offers the added advantage of creating an opportunity to work with students in an informal setting, away from the pressures and demands of academic or administrative interactions. As discussed above, this may go some way to fostering better inter-cultural understanding. Prompts for further exploration, such as “How can take-up and deep engagement with engagement activities be maximised?” (Spencer-Oatey, Dauber and Williams, 2014, p.43) are helpful in highlighting areas for future work to deepen the impact of our activity.

Institutions looking at creating a similar offer should keep in mind that our online service was developed in response to crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. We now need to establish how to maintain the online offer and make it sustainable. Whilst we are pleased with the quality of interaction our provision has facilitated, we are mindful that with the eventual(?) return to campus-based life, we may have to compete more for students' time and thus it is important not to be complacent. Post-Covid we must work out how to ensure the positive gains of the online setting can be sustained.

### **“Craft it and they will come!”**

Creating an online space to support extra-curricular language practice, guided by the principle of co-creation can help engage students in a time of online study. The inclusion of an Arts and Crafts provision can act as an effective vehicle to enhance the well-being of both students and staff and promote resilience. This has helped us buffer some of the negative effects of isolation/distress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to deliver this kind of provision successfully, it is essential to get staff enthused when setting up a similar

venture, especially if it is something new for them. Students have been very flexible throughout this, so we would say that institutions don't need to worry about their enthusiasm or willingness to engage – craft it and they will come!

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## Technology-enhanced dialogic feedback:

### Supporting feedback engagement in challenging times

Angelos Bakogiannis

Teesside University

#### Setting the scene

##### *Background*

Feedback is not only integral to student satisfaction (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton, 2002) but also a key factor in student success (Hill, 2007) and has been widely researched due to its substantial potential to enhance learning, remaining one of the top priorities of teaching practitioners (Carless and Boud, 2018). Diverse conceptions of feedback have been identified over time, with more traditional approaches considering feedback as the ‘product’ of a ‘transmission process’ in which effective formulation and delivery would suffice (Carless, 2015) shifting into more ‘dynamic’ approaches considering feedback as an ‘interactive’ process (Nicol, 2010), within which ‘shared and individual interpretations are developed through dialogue, sense-making and co-construction between participants’ (Carless and Boud, 2018, p.253). The latter requires active engagement of all parties involved, either peers (peer feedback) or teachers and students, and implies effective collaboration and shared responsibility for co-producing feedback that can be utilised to enhance the quality of student work (Carless, 2015). Dialogic feedback has been identified as a critical component of formative assessment (Black and William, 1998) and, as such, has been largely integrated into the assessment curriculum, attempts being made at raising students’ awareness of the importance of feedback and encouraging them to actively engage in the feedback experience. This is probably why supporting feedback engagement comprises one of the key factors in enhancing the student experience of higher education (HE).

##### *Context*

Given its critical role in formative assessment (Black and William, 1998), dialogic feedback has been introduced as part of the assessment curriculum for **Academic Study Skills**, a 30-credit academic module delivered as part of the Foundation Year Programme (Level 3) in the School of Health and Life Sciences at Teesside University. The module runs over two terms and aims to provide students with the opportunity to develop the study and language skills that are essential for studying at undergraduate level focusing on both generic- (Term 1) and discipline-based (Term 2) instruction. Summative assessment at the end of the module

requires students to produce a 750-900 essay using a selection of secondary sources handed out a week in advance. Part of the on-going formative assessment seeks to provide students with opportunities to practise writing a secondary sources essay. Besides making them familiar with the process and the format of their summative assessment, this part of the formative assessment is designed to actively support feedback engagement offering students better insights into their own work and the strategies they can utilise to improve their academic writing. To achieve this, a series of sessions including self-assessment, peer-review, open-class discussion and individual tutorials have been added to the timetable and, in 2018/2019, these sessions were successfully run in the classroom, promoting student engagement and receiving positive feedback.

### *Challenges*

In 2019/2020, however, getting these sessions to run in the classroom was no longer an option. The sudden outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 had a severe impact on HE, with universities closing down their premises in response to lockdown measures (Schleicher, 2020). This crisis forced universities to adapt the diverse elements of their teaching and learning curriculum to this entirely new context created by the pandemic. It was, unexpectedly, a time when all people involved in HE - both teachers and students - had to confront with a distinct change in the educational paradigm: 'Online training through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) had ceased to be an option in the teaching methodology and became a necessity in order to continue with the student learning process' (Espino Diaz et al., 2020, p.4). Learning environments had to be reinvented, with digitalisation being expanded and online learning becoming the dominant mode - moving from classroom to online teaching via the use of different digital learning platforms. This emergency online learning has raised numerous questions and concerns about the value of university education offered and the extent to which engaging teachers and students in the use of education technology can successfully support meaningful teaching and learning to promote and enhance the student experience (Bates and Sangra, 2011). Still, in the absence of other alternatives, HE had to adapt in the changing circumstances and HE practitioners had to do their best to support students in these challenging times.

### **Developing the initiative**

#### *Rationale*

With this in mind, but also considering that 'online learning can take many different forms, including those pedagogically more innovative and engaging, than commonly used processes of knowledge delivery and assessment' (Teras et al., 2020, p.865), I decided to

revise and adapt the sessions on self-assessment, peer-review, open class discussion and individual tutorials to an online learning environment. Making use of digital learning and communication platforms, I have designed this teaching and learning initiative (referred to as dialogic feedback exercise in this narrative) to support feedback engagement of foundation year students at Teesside University in the time of Covid-19.

### *Design*

The dialogic feedback exercise comprised three main parts:

- A video introducing the exercise and outlining the steps of the process; familiarising students with the main aspects of the marking criteria used for summative assessment; providing generic group feedback focusing on key themes and patterns identified specifically in terms of best practice and areas of development; and offering illustrative examples for some of these areas to act as models for students during self-assessment and peer-review (Slides in Appendix 1)
- A self-assessment task requiring students to review their work using a checklist provided to them in light of the feedback, the comments and the examples presented in the video. This part also comprised an optional peer-review aspect, with students being encouraged to trade their secondary sources essay with a peer and use the self-assessment checklist as a guide to review and comment on that work. They were then encouraged to meet online to discuss their feedback and compare and contrast their thoughts/perspectives with those of their peer. Finally, students had to focus on certain aspects of academic writing (a maximum of three) and revise/improve their work based on self-assessment and feedback from their peers (for those who engaged in peer-review and discussion); and
- Individual audio feedback, including response to students' comments and specific feedback and band, sent to students before virtual face-to-face tutorials allowing them time to listen to and understand the comments/suggestions raised by the teacher on areas for development that would be used as the basis for discussion during the tutorial.

### *Delivery*

The exercise was delivered entirely online using digital learning and communication platforms. The video was uploaded on Blackboard, the virtual learning management system that Teesside University supports, for all students to be able to access. Online peer-review for those students who selected to go through this part of the process took place on Microsoft Teams where students had already been allocated into groups and were shown how to

initiate meetings with their peers. Virtual face-to-face tutorials were delivered on either Microsoft Teams or Zoom (the latter being employed to facilitate those students who had technical issues with accessing Microsoft Teams using their own laptop at home). Constant support was provided throughout the process and students were encouraged to post any general questions pertaining to the exercise on Microsoft Teams for the entire group to follow up on responses or send any personal questions, concerns or issues they had to deal with to me via email.

### **Evaluating the initiative**

#### *Impact on the learning experience*

Besides the recorded impact of the dialogic feedback exercise on student satisfaction, with feedback, as discussed, being an integral part of it (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton, 2002), it could be argued that supporting feedback engagement through this exercise had a major impact on the learning experience. The exercise helped students to better understand and use feedback; by allowing them to be actively engaged in the feedback experience, students had the opportunity to interact, clarify, question and interpret the feedback they received from teacher and peers and decide how it could be best applied to improve their academic writing. It also helped them to be more receptive to engagement in feedback and more open to dialogue by reducing barriers to help seeking. Students were more willing to ask for help when engaged in dialogue occurring in the form of a virtual discussion through which they were encouraged to talk about how they could operationalise some of the comments they had received and identify possible ways of improving their work.

Students who engaged in peer-review were also helped to develop audience awareness and overcome potential emotional barriers to engaging in peer feedback. These students had the opportunity to learn through reading and assessing the work of a peer, finding themselves in the shoes of the reader of a piece of academic writing (the same way their teachers do) and raising their awareness of what is required and expected to produce. Moreover, engaging in conversation with a peer, instead of their teacher, helped students feel safer, and less intimidated to talk about mistakes and give guidance or advice. It also strengthened their skills in pair work, supporting and learning from each other.

#### *Feedback*

Feedback on the exercise was largely positive on various grounds. First, most students felt that the exercise allowed them to be more critically engaged with their own work. Having the opportunity to discuss the comments was particularly highlighted considering that, as



suggested, getting written feedback had sometimes left them confused, not being sure what some of the comments meant or how to resolve the issues identified. Second, many students thought the exercise was motivational and empowering, allowing them to take ownership of their learning experience and boosting their confidence in academic writing. Discussing the feedback and knowing which direction to go in to improve their work facilitated the process of making it better and gave students a strong sense of achievement, which had never gained with traditional approaches to feedback. Thirdly, students felt that this exercise has helped them develop a task-specific behaviour and change their attitude towards the other modules of their foundation year programme. Learning how to critique their own essays and thinking of ways to improve their writing in consultation with their lecturers (engaging in dialogue about feedback and comments) was a highly transferrable skill, leading to increased self-efficacy. Several students, especially those who also engaged in peer-review, felt that they were able to learn from listening to their peers and, through evaluating the work of others, they were able to recognise their own mistakes. Finally, some students commented on how the exercise encouraged pair work; some of them found this quite positive in the sense that they felt more comfortable discussing their work with a peer rather than the teacher, while others felt quite embarrassed and were reluctant to talk to a peer about the issues they had identified in his/her work.

### **Moving Forward**

#### *Reflection*

Gibbs (1998) argues that “It is not enough to have an experience in order to learn; without reflecting on this experience, it may be quickly forgotten, or its learning potential lost” (p.9). In order to maximise the impact this experience may have in the future, I thought that, before moving on to make recommendations for other institutions, it would be helpful to record my personal thoughts, feelings, critical evaluation and action plan on this exercise designed to support feedback engagement.

Overall, the exercise ran smoothly. At first, I was slightly concerned as to how students would respond to the exercise considering that it was not too long that all teaching moved online so fast and most students were still struggling to cope with this sudden and unexpected change. I was therefore unsure about the extent to which students would engage with peer-review and online discussions. This is why self-assessment was purposefully set as the only compulsory part of the exercise, allowing students the option to engage in peer-review. This decision, however, confused some of the students as those who wished to undertake peer-review had difficulties in identifying peers who were willing to do so. While responses to self-



assessment were on time, complaints were raised about the challenges to engage and complete peer-review. Online tutorials reinforced student engagement with feedback with meaningful discussions taking place about how comments and areas for development identified could be utilised in practice to help them improve their academic writing. Response and comments on exercise (discussed above) reaffirm the importance of dialogic feedback in formative assessment (Black and William, 1998) and support the integration of technology-mediated dialogic feedback into the teaching curriculum to enhance the student experience. In the future, I plan to provide students with more opportunities of engaging with feedback using this exercise making peer-review a compulsory part and allocating peer work so that all students can go through the process of interacting and learning from each other.

### *Recommendations*

Considering the impact of this exercise on supporting feedback engagement on various aspects and the feedback received by those engaged in it on multiple grounds, I would recommend that all institutions integrate technology-mediated dialogic feedback in their teaching and assessment curriculum. This can be done either by adopting the exercise as described in this narrative or by adapting it to meet the needs and the requirements of the context the exercise is to be implemented. Either way, it has been clearly established that setting up virtual learning environments and engaging students in tasks that include self-assessment and peer-review promoting dialogue and facilitating feedback as an ongoing conversation is essential to support feedback engagement and enhance the student experience of HE. It has also been confirmed that technology-mediated dialogic feedback can effectively support student engagement especially in challenging times as the ones we are currently in, having, as discussed, various positive outcomes on learning. If we, therefore, keep investing in strategies to integrate dialogic feedback in our teaching practice and use education technology to support it, not only in times of crisis, we can help our students make the most out of their learning experience, promoting good practice and ensuring sustained impact.

### **Conclusion**

Having attended a library workshop on providing constructive feedback and using feedback effectively at Teesside University in which the process of dialogic (peer feedback) and its substantial potential to enhance learning were explored, I started integrating this new interactive approach to feedback in the assessment curriculum of the modules I lead. Following the outburst of the pandemic and the urgent need for all learning to move swiftly online, I started thinking of how online learning could accommodate and support feedback

engagement in such challenging times. Reading an interesting blog on how the *Dialogic feedback process gets easier with technology and learning analytics* (Yang 2019) initiated a literature search on dialogic feedback and the use of technology. I came across a chapter on technology and feedback design (Dawson et al., 2018) that was the reference point for finding out more on technology-mediated dialogic feedback. This led to conceptualising, planning, designing and delivering the exercise discussed in this narrative; an exercise, which, based on the impact on learning and the feedback received, I highly recommend to all peers in institutions all over the world.

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## Appendix 1: Slides used in Video

### Slide 1



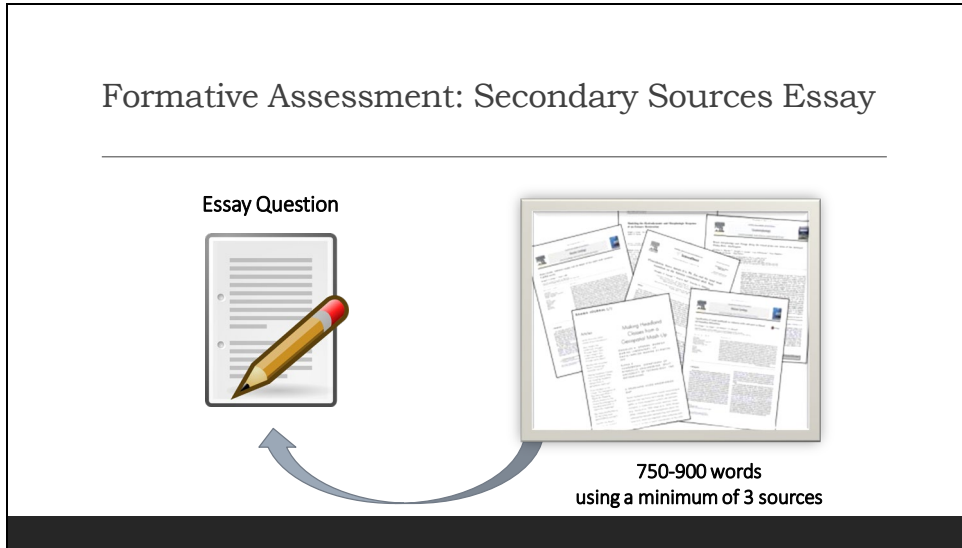
Slide 1 features a vertical image on the left showing a concrete staircase with a white zigzag line painted on the wall above it, symbolizing progress or a path. To the right of the image, the title "Academic Study Skills: Dialogic Feedback" is centered in a serif font. Below the title, a horizontal line separates it from the date "MARCH 2020", which is also centered.

# Academic Study Skills: Dialogic Feedback

---

MARCH 2020

### Slide 2



Slide 2 is titled "Formative Assessment: Secondary Sources Essay". Below the title, there is a diagram illustrating the essay process. On the left, under the heading "Essay Question", is an icon of a document with a pencil. On the right is an icon of several newspaper clippings. A curved arrow points from the newspaper clippings back to the document icon, indicating that the sources are used to answer the question. Below the newspaper icon, the text "750-900 words using a minimum of 3 sources" is displayed.

## Formative Assessment: Secondary Sources Essay

---

Essay Question

750-900 words  
using a minimum of 3 sources

Slide 3

## Outline

---

- **Assessment Criteria and Generic Group Feedback** (incl. examples) - in this video
- **Self-assessment Task** - to complete by next week
- **Individual response to your comments** incl. specific feedback and band - individual audio feedback
- **One-to-one tutorials** (on Microsoft Teams) to discuss individual feedback and questions (if any)

Slide 4

## Assessment Criteria

---

- **Task Achievement and Content** (including style and academic conventions)
- **Organisation, cohesion and coherence**
- **Lexical resource and Grammatical Accuracy and Range**



### Slide 5

#### Task Achievement and Content (including style and academic conventions)

---

Addresses all parts of the task

Develops, extends and supports ideas

Uses academic style and register

Follows referencing conventions (in-text and end-text)

Follows formatting requirements

### Slide 6

#### Organisation, cohesion and coherence

---

Paragraphing (structure and development)

Essay structure (introduction incl. thesis statement and conclusion)

Clarity

Unity

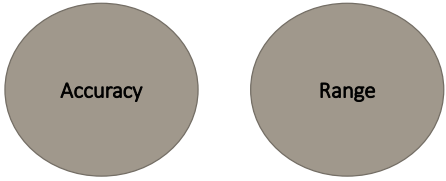
Cohesion and Coherence

Slide 7

### Lexical Resource and Grammatical Accuracy and Range

---

Use of vocabulary and grammatical structures



The diagram consists of two identical grey circles arranged horizontally. The left circle is labeled 'Accuracy' in the center, with the text '(the state of being correct)' centered below it. The right circle is labeled 'Range' in the center, with the text '(the area of variation)' centered below it.

Accuracy  
(the state of being correct)

Range  
(the area of variation)

Slide 8

### Generic Feedback

---

Pay more attention to the structure of your essay (introduction, main body paragraphs and conclusion)

You need to start with an introduction (from general to specific) and include a thesis statement

You need to finish with a conclusion (a summary of main points and a comment/suggestion or recommendation)

Check for academic style (avoid the use of personal or informal language)

Avoid making strong claims (use cautious language)

Slide 9

## Generic Feedback cont.

---

Make sure that there is a flow in your argument... that ideas are connected together and do not read like a list of ideas placed next to each other (use a variety of linking words such as first, secondly, finally, however, furthermore, in contrast, to sum up, in conclusion)

Pay more attention to referencing conventions (e.g. quotation marks and page numbers for direct quotations)

You need to include a list of references at the end of your essay.

Slide 10

## Generic Feedback cont.

---

Don't forget to acknowledge the source where information to support your argument comes from (in-text citations)

Avoid copying and pasting ideas from sources. That is PLAGIARISM!

Pay more attention to paraphrasing from sources (change the words, the structure but not the meaning)



Slide 11

## Generic Feedback cont.

---

Make sure that all your paragraphs have clear topic sentences.

Don't not discuss more than ONE idea in each of your paragraphs.

You need to use a range of supporting sentences to develop, expand and support your argument (details, explanation, examples, facts and figures)

Each paragraph should end with a concluding sentence.

Slide 12

## Generic Feedback cont.

---

Pay attention to sentence structure. Avoid fragments and long sentences

Make an attempt at more complex sentences (e.g. While evidence seems to suggest that..., the extent to which people tend to follow the instructions provided is still under question)

Avoid repetition of words or ideas

Pay more attention to spelling mistakes, typos and punctuation

### Slide 13

## Generic Feedback cont.

Proofread or ask a friend/peer to proofread your essay before submission!



### Slide 14

## Example: Structure

I strongly believe that sports involving violence shouldn't be banned from the tv as it is sports like this that help to shape some people and bring them out of their comfort zones. Although sports such as boxing are violent they also adhere to a strict set of rules and have correct procedures that need to be followed so that the competitors don't leave their matches with any long term injuries. These sports that are considered violent have a strict set of PPE (personal protective equipment) that must be worn such as gum shields and if under 16 in boxing you must wear protective head gear. In any sports they can result in violence that isn't always kept under control and no rules tend to be followed in sports such as rugby or football when the game results in violence yet these sports are continued to be broadcasted on the tv without any issues, rugby itself as a sport is violent the players taking part can have a wide array of any injuries ranging from head injuries to muscular injuries yet it is a form of entertainment and for some people a hobby that they enjoy to do. If you take away violent sports for a lot of athletes that takes away there career this resulting in an increase in unemployment as a lot of athletes leave college or university to pursue their careers in professional sports meaning that they are no longer qualified in any field. Taking away these sports results in potentially ruining a lot of peoples lives as well as causing uproar to the public who view these sports as a form of entertainment. Taking away such sports will also cause a knock on effect in the revenue of the sporting industries putting not just athletes out of their jobs but trainers as well. Sports have governing bodies to watch over them to ensure that the sports don't get out of control, this ensures that the people involved in these sports are insured as well as know the risk as to what could potentially happen if they get injured this shows the athletes know the risk and willingly go forward and take those risks in training and in fighting and if they are okay with that lifestyle and the population are happy watching it as a form of entertainment then it should be left in the TV for the public to view.

Slide 15

## Example: Introduction

In regards to the question of whether or not sports containing violence should be banned, I could only say that I somewhat agree.

Slide 16

## Example: Paragraph structure and development

There is so many people that train to be in the boxing industry that are not a violent person but just enjoy the whole concept of boxing.

Slide 17

## Example: Style

There is this point that violence in sporting activities such as boxing and MMA could cause others to act violently. To this I say complete nonsense, people can think for themselves, it's not exactly rocket science to use your common sense to realise there is a time and place for everything.

Slide 18

## Example: Conclusion

Overall, my opinions on the matter are against what the issue at hand is and I feel that a large majority of people also have these views

Slide 19

## Example: Cohesion

Violent sports should be banned as...

Violent sports i.e. martial arts and boxing are traditional forms of art dating back..

Violent sports such as martial arts have been proven..

Slide 20

## Example: Lexical Resource Range

If you **ban** sports such as boxing and martial arts it would **mean** that other sports may be looked at to be **banned** which **means** some sports could **change** their rules and **change** certain aspects of how they're played. If this was to happen maybe certain sports may not meet the requirement and then could be **banned**. This could **cause** a cascade effect which could **cause** sports which can have violent tendencies to be **banned**.

Slide 21

## Example: Grammatical Accuracy

In any sports they can result in violence that isn't always kept under control and no rules tend to be followed in sports such as rugby or football when the game results in violence yet these sports are continued to be broadcasted on the tv without any issues, rugby itself as a sport is violent the players taking part can have a wide array of any injuries ranging from head injuries to muscular injuries yet it is a form of entertainment and for some people a hobby that they enjoy to do.

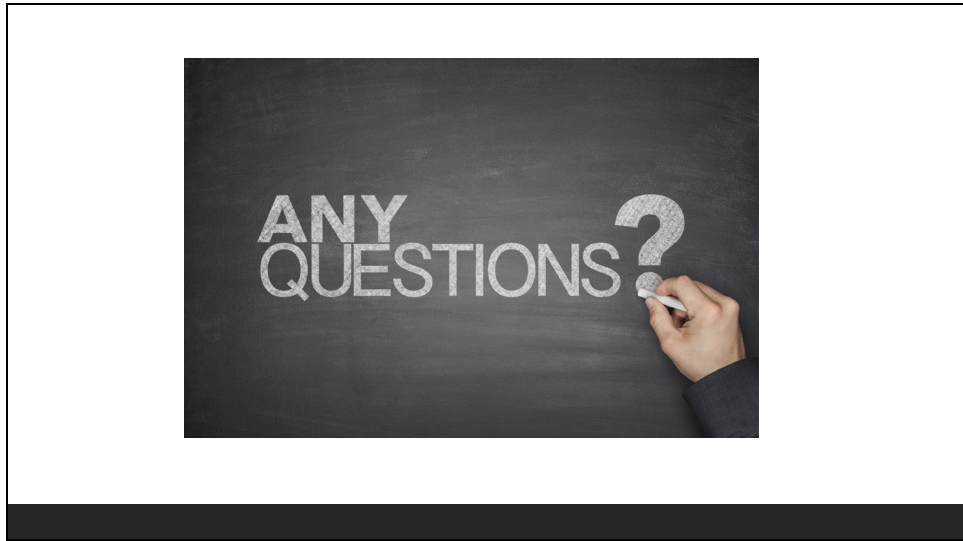
Slide 22

## Self-assessment

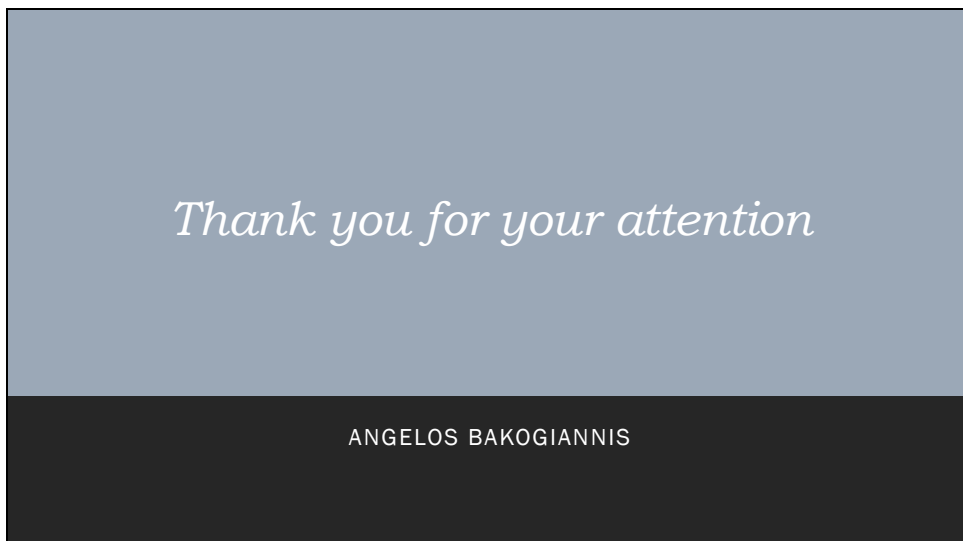
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- ✓ Which aspects of academic writing do I most need to work on to improve my essay?  
(focus on **a maximum of two aspects for each area** on your checklist)
- ✓ **OPTIONAL:** Trade your essay with a peer. To what extent does their feedback/comments on your essay compare to yours?
- ✓ What can I do to improve the aspects of academic writing identified as priorities for improvement? How can I operationalise some of the feedback/comments I have got on my essay?

Slide 23



Slide 24



## Responding to the COVID-19 challenges: The case of a small EAP team and ways forward

Celia Antoniou

University of the West of Scotland

### Setting the scene

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) colleagues from across the sector faced the challenge of transferring sessions online, often without proper institutional direction, within days and with limited access to available or appropriate support. As a member of a small EAP team at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), I found it particularly important to explore my own understanding about the effects of switching to online delivery and the impact on my personal teaching experience and those of my colleagues. This initiative was closely related to my attempts to explore ways of supporting students through this process especially as we were approaching the end of the Spring term and the final term assessments were to take place as originally scheduled. As we work in an English language unit with 10 tutors in total (both lecturers and associate lecturers), we faced the daunting task of getting all of our courses into a fully online delivery format for the last three weeks of the term, in addition to the expectation of maintaining quality regardless of delivery mode.

We therefore adjusted to an “emergency remote teaching environment” (ERTE) situation which differs significantly from pre-planned online learning, in that ERTes offer rapidly developed, temporary instructional support in a crisis (Hodges et al., 2020) without pre-planned resources or infrastructure. As we developed responses to the various challenges that emerged, our team discussions focused on exploring the following aspects, to make an assessment of the situation at the time and simultaneously of the future student and staff needs: 1) online teaching experiences (including feelings and teaching strategies), 2) resources and feedback, 3) transition from onsite to online teaching, 4) online support, 5) student response, and 6) teacher training needs. This report focuses on the case of one of my in-session English language classes in March 2020 and it also presents some of the institutional initiatives and reflections from members of staff and students as these were recorded between March 2020 and the beginning of the current teaching term. The discussion will hopefully enable readers to evaluate the transferability of the practice(s) described and adopt good practice examples in their own contexts.



### The solution(s) identified

To identify solutions, a reflection-on-action approach was followed which has been defined as “the retrospective contemplation of practice in order to uncover the knowledge used in a particular situation, by analysing and interpreting the information recalled” (Chang, 2020). As a reflective practitioner within this framework, I focused on how the situation might have been handled differently and what other knowledge would have been helpful.

The identified solutions were divided into micro and macro solutions to ensure that colleagues would be able to resolve both immediate and longer-term challenges (Figure 1).

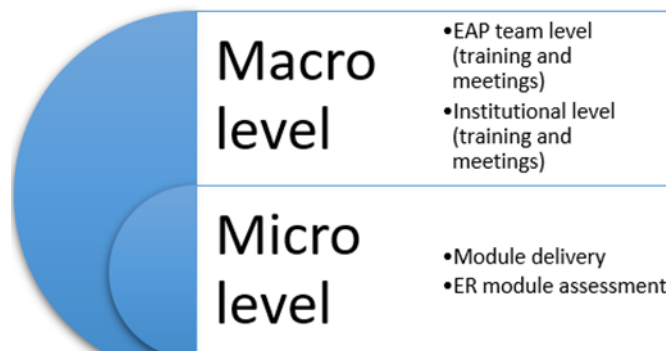


Figure 1: Identified solutions per level of intervention

At a micro-level, the solutions that were implemented at an individual module level were identified with regards to a) final week emergency online module delivery and b) emergency remote module assessment. At a macro-level, internal institutional online teaching and assessment training sessions were held within the EAP team to inform a common approach towards delivering online sessions but also within the Faculty (the latter were in line with the institutional online teaching policy, to inform ways forward and teaching practice in the post Covid-19 period).

At the micro-level and for the delivery of the aforementioned module, it was decided that the module would be delivered online and the preparation steps involved making decisions on the following important aspects (Figure 2):

## Narratives of innovation and resilience

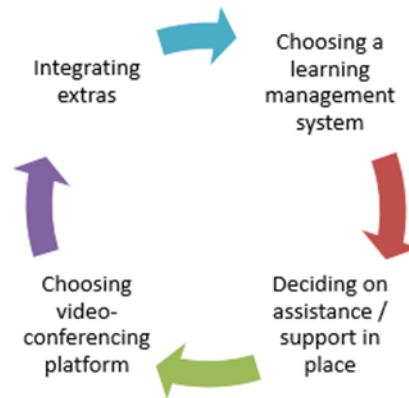


Figure 2: Preparation steps

As both myself and the students were already familiar with Moodle, I decided to use it as the learning management system (LMS) and a space where students would be able to access materials but also to complete quizzes and various other synchronous and asynchronous activities (such as forums). Even though at the time the institution offered access to MS Teams, the decision to use Moodle was primarily informed by the level of familiarity that had already been established and therefore Teams was not explored further due to lack of access to further support. Instead, Zoom was selected as a video-conferencing platform to host class meetings. To enable students to work collaboratively online, they were organised into groups using the breakout rooms and collaborative writing would either take place in OneDrive (on a link that the students would share with me) or using other applications like Padlet (Figure 3).

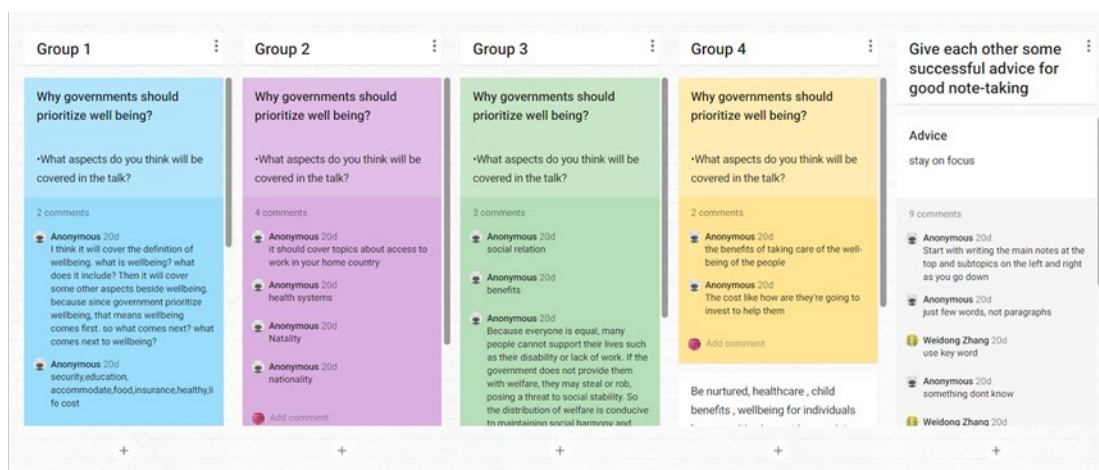


Figure 3: An example of a Padlet online collaborative writing activity

To enable students to continue working collaboratively after classroom time for the completion of homework, an online forum was created on Moodle which was e-moderated by

myself at the end of the week. The forum would open on the day of the class, the chosen topic was related to the content covered in class and then students were invited to contribute by posting their ideas and commenting on the work of one more student. E-moderation was essential to ensure participation as was the preparation of the students for online participation. The topic question was formed as an open-ended question and the students were encouraged to link and refer to other posts in the forum and avoid short comments that do not generate discussion. My role during the moderation would be to facilitate discussions, praise the students' contributions and ask them to elaborate a bit further by providing examples if their posts lacked critical thinking.

In terms of assessing the students remotely, the challenge for the specific module lied in the fact that it involved two types of assessment that were both originally scheduled to be delivered in class. The first assessment involved students participating in a debate and the second a classroom test with reading and essay writing components. The debate assessment was scheduled to take place online eventually by organising students into two groups that would debate their topics at different time slots. Additional time to train students on turn-taking online and the rules they would need to follow was required to ensure that the debate would run smoothly. Their sessions were recorded for moderation purposes and the question and answer session followed as normal at the end of each debate session.

The online version of the classroom test was a challenging one as it was not possible to ensure that the students would not consult external sources during the time of the exam. There were also other aspects that required additional thought such as the duration of the exam (given the online nature of the test) and the length of the reading text. Therefore, I decided to break down the exam components into two parts and offer a break between the reading and the writing part to allow students to rest from the continuous exposure to the screen. For the reading test, I decided to present the text in smaller parts by using a form-type document and the questions would invite students to express their opinion on specific aspects of the text rather than the traditional vocabulary or text comprehension questions. A similar approach was followed with the writing component of the test, where the students were invited to submit their essay format response on OneDrive and share their document with me. During both tests, the students were required to have their cameras on and complete their work during the specified timeframe and while the whole class was on Zoom (on mute). This was to ensure that the students would be able to ask any questions during the exam.

Moving on to the solutions that were provided at a macro level, the EAP team organised emergency online meetings with colleagues to discuss any issues on a weekly basis. This enabled colleagues to share advice and ideas which included technology related queries, administrative ones and many others and eventually led to the delivery of Good Practice Sessions (GPS) where colleagues could share examples of successful activities or online tools/applications. The sessions were quite helpful and successful and of an one hour duration which led to their monthly status in the Fall term. Each session would focus on specific topics of interest to the team such as engaging students online, useful tools and others. Apart from the support received at an EAP team level, the University also organised Days as opportunities for colleagues across Departments to discuss and exchange ideas. Then, in collaboration with Learning Development Services, webinars and asynchronous Moodle training and online teaching sessions were also offered to all members of staff.

### **Impact on the students and staff**

The immediate benefit to students was the opportunity to continue their studies online without further disruption (March-May 2020, in-sessional support) but also to be able to be assessed in a way that would reflect their overall achievements during the Spring term. This related to carrying out the alternative assessments that were presented in section 2 which would enable students to demonstrate their level of development.

Another benefit was that the March-May 2020 period served as a trial stage for module design and various types of assessments that were later on transferred in the pre-sessional course delivery successfully (following the implementation of appropriate online teaching frameworks). This was further supported by initial student feedback and suggestions that were collected online and were later on incorporated into the programmes. More specifically, the students mentioned that they managed to develop their digital skills and particularly enjoyed working with different applications for the completion of the tasks. They also enjoyed the levels of interaction and the fact that some of the tasks enabled them to collaborate with classmates with different interaction patterns (i.e. forums, video-conferencing sessions, etc). In terms of classroom management, colleagues mentioned that there were “issues that needed to be addressed” but that “this “new normal” is workable” and that “it’s great watching the students become comfortable (or even experts) in using the various online platforms”. They particularly stressed that “the fact that they are all in the ‘same boat’ seems to build a strong sense of camaraderie, which bleeds over into the classroom”. To further support this, student feedback also indicated that students felt they “work together really well, helping each other overcome obstacles” during the class. The implemented solutions for the delivery

of the module were welcomed by the students and enabled them to develop additional skills, complete their studies and experience different learning modes.

The views from colleagues also emerged during the good practice sessions that were held and also during team meetings. With regards to their online teaching experiences colleagues mentioned that some of the challenges included becoming familiar with the use of online platforms and the difficulty of “teaching to a blank screen/ my own reflection!” when the students did not have their cameras on. The training sessions that were held enabled colleagues to gain greater confidence in using technology when teaching online but also to interpret the switched off camera as a non-disrupting lesson factor and rather as an extra “time to think” element. In terms of the received support, staff comments focused on the fact that the pandemic was a difficult period as “we were all learning at the same time, so it was sometimes difficult to find a person to lean on, or even just have the answer to a difficult question. At first, it felt isolating, but weekly meetings helped”. In addition, colleagues commented on the transition period and mentioned that the six month period since the pandemic enabled them “to become much more comfortable teaching online”, and familiarise themselves with various tools by using them as much as possible as the more comfortable they felt online, the more at ease the lessons felt. They also felt that over time the use of the camera during the sessions improved as the students understood that “having the camera on affects the atmosphere of the lesson”.

### **Recommendations**

One of the key lessons from this emergency approach to remote teaching was to ensure that online materials (digital versions) were always part of the EAP courses and of the general provision as in some cases these were not always available. This has proved helpful in the Fall term as all of the materials were in digital version and could be accessed immediately by both students and teachers.

An additional lesson was that colleagues were invited to challenge their own views of delivering online sessions which often included versions of recording sessions. These soon proved not to be very student engaging and therefore the use and exploration of alternative platforms and tools along with optimal combinations followed. These were similar to the ones described for the delivery on the in-session module and enabled colleagues to seek creative alternatives for online module delivery instead of attempting to translate face-to-face activities to online ones.

Another learning point included the e-moderation of asynchronous activities that proved particularly helpful in enabling students to participate during times of facing technical issues. This is an aspect in online pedagogy that is not very often explored further as forums are often avoided by colleagues. However, as a carefully designed activity with appropriate moderation, forums enable students to engage in discussion and interact outside class.

The discussions with colleagues revealed additional recommendations in terms of voicing worries within a team. These included realisations in terms of the effort and workload that was required but also internal team assumptions and cases where a colleague's hard work was interpreted as 'natural ability' due to their age. This therefore leads to the suggestion to always encourage the members of a team to express their views by engaging them in frequent discussions about teaching plans and also to record the activities of a team in order to monitor workload imbalance effectively.

### **A useful prompt for further reflection**

The findings of the report and the solutions that were described and implemented resulted from a reflection-on-action approach as it was outlined previously in this narrative. An equally valuable prompt for reflection is the ABC Curriculum Design approach which was developed as a hands-on rapid development programme for educational re-design by Clive Young and Natasa Perović from UCL Digital Education (2020). The ABC approach offers the opportunity to academics to re-conceptualise the online design and delivery of their modules by identifying appropriate tools as well as areas of development in relation to learning technology. It is also a very good way of reviewing existing modules and revisiting practices with a view to explore alternatives and improve current practice.

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## Supporting student learning in an emergency remote teaching situation through the provision of support and sharing of good practices across a large teaching team

Jane Heath

University of Leeds

### Introduction

#### *Context*

In spring 2020, my co-lead and I began to deliver Academic English for Postgraduate Studies Level Three (AEPS3) online for the first time. The course was a 10-week English for General Academic Purposes pre-sessional at the University of Leeds Language Centre. It was a large course, with 340 students across 20 groups and 31 teachers, most of whom had not previously taught on the course. Due to the rapid development of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had little time to prepare and adapt the course for online delivery before teaching started on 30 March. This was Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT): we were seeking stopgap solutions that would suffice in the short term, rather than delivering carefully crafted online instruction (Craig, 2020; Gardner, 2020).

The course was delivered using several platforms. We used Microsoft Teams for communication within the teaching team and with students; Microsoft OneNote's Class Notebook for sharing materials with students and accessing their classwork; Zoom videoconferencing software for webinars; Flipgrid's video discussion platform for speaking/presentation practice; and the University's Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for submission of student work. Later in the course, most teachers used Microsoft OneDrive folders for collaborative tasks. On subsequent courses, we have deliberately used fewer platforms: further discussion of this falls outside the scope of this account.

#### *The Challenge*

Almost all of the platforms used were new to almost all of the team, including the module leaders, excepting the VLE, with which all teachers were familiar, and Teams, which four of us had used the previous term to communicate within the teaching team only. Furthermore, very few teachers had experience of teaching online with any platforms; thus, we started the course somewhat lacking in expertise in effective practices for online instruction.



According to the TPACK framework, teachers must have Technological, Pedagogical And Content Knowledge (thus TPACK) in order to know when and how to best use technology to teach their subject (Mishra and Koehler, 2006; Harris, Mishra and Koehler, 2009). Teachers must also understand the interplay between these types of knowledge: the “connections, interactions, affordances and constraints between and among content, pedagogy and technology” (Mishra and Koehler, 2006, p.1025).

Technological knowledge does not only mean knowing how to use a particular platform. More important is the “ability to learn and adapt to new technologies” (Mishra and Koehler, 2006, p.1028) and to “understand information technology broadly enough to apply it productively..., to recognise when information technology can assist or impede the achievement of a goal, and to continually adapt to changes” (Koehler, Mishra and Cain, 2017, p.15). In this sense, some team members displayed much greater technological knowledge than others. In response to a survey that colleagues were invited to complete to support this account, one teacher described this difference in digital competence as the greatest challenge faced by the team.

Learning to teach with digital technologies can be challenging even in ‘normal’ circumstances, let alone ERT. Firstly, technologies are constantly evolving, which makes it difficult for teachers to maintain their proficiency (Harris, Mishra and Koehler, 2009; Mei, Aas and Medgard, 2019). Secondly, they are “protean”: they can be used in many different ways (Koehler, Mishra and Cain, 2017, p.15). Teachers must not only learn how to use the technology, but how to use it effectively to promote students’ learning (Harris, Mishra and Koehler, 2009). Thirdly, digital technologies are “opaque” in the sense that their “inner workings are hidden from users” (Koehler, Mishra and Cain, 2017, p.15). This can make it challenging for teachers to fully understand the affordances and constraints of technologies in order to use them flexibly.

As students’ learning experience on our course would depend heavily on teachers’ ability to use technologies effectively, supporting teachers with less technological knowledge and sharing good practices for effective online instruction was of utmost importance. However, due to the rapid development of the pandemic, as we raced to ensure that the first materials were ready, there was little time to explore the platforms ourselves, let alone develop training materials for our team. Therefore, we needed to find ways to provide technological support and share good practices for online teaching once the course was underway.



## The Solutions

### *Promoting a collaborative Community of Practice*

We applied three main solutions. Firstly, we promoted a highly collaborative environment, in the belief that teachers' professional development is more effective when working with others than individually (DuFour, 2004). We hoped to establish a Teaching Community or Community of Practice (CoP) that would allow teachers to construct new knowledge together (Younie and Leask, 2013; Vangrieken et al., 2017). To this end, we asked teachers to ask questions, report technical issues or share tips 'publicly' on our staff Team, rather than through private messages (see Figure 1 for examples). We encouraged all teachers to respond to such posts, sending 'Praise' to teachers whose responses were particularly helpful. A vast amount of support and sharing of practices was soon evident on our staff Team. This made an enormous impact on our online teaching practices and thus our students' learning.



Figure 1: Examples of support and sharing of practices on Teams

We also sought to prepare our team for teaching by creating opportunities for teachers to practise using platforms with each other. For example, we set up Flipgrid topics to which teachers could respond with their own videos and Zoom meetings to test out various features. This valuable “hands-on experience” allowed teachers to experience for themselves the “opportunities and challenges” of online learning that their students would soon be experiencing (Ernst et al., 2013, p.329). Teachers and students both benefitted from teachers’ seeing their instruction from their students’ perspective.

One potential difficulty was that many of our teachers were not known to us or each other, as they were recent recruits. Due to the pandemic, we could not meet in person, which made building relationships more difficult. This could have led to a lack of trust, impeding our efforts to build a CoP (Newmann, 1996, cited in Mei, Aas and Medgard, 2019, p.24). However, despite or indeed perhaps because of the circumstances, a strong sense of community and belonging did seem to emerge for many team members, with teachers offering to support each other with the new tools and technologies, making the challenging situation more manageable both for us as module leaders and for the wider teaching team.

Due to the move to ERT, there was a temporary shift in the types of knowledge that were most valued on our course, with technological knowledge arguably becoming more important than pedagogical and content knowledge for the first weeks. This shift was discomfiting for some highly experienced and competent EAP teachers whose technological knowledge was less developed, as it seemed to threaten their sense of professional identity (de Pauw and Heath, 2020). Simultaneously, the shift raised the profile of some teachers with less extensive EAP experience but greater technological knowledge, as they took on a supportive role, sharing technical solutions and good practices (de Pauw and Heath, 2020). As module leaders, we needed to be aware of these shifting roles and their impact on individual teachers, as well as the team as a whole.

### *Direct sharing of good practices*

Our second solution was to ask teachers directly to share successful practices. Early student feedback on webinars varied greatly, suggesting that some pedagogic practices were more effective than others. Therefore, we asked teachers to add solutions and/or challenges to a shared document:

Brief description of scenario	What went well and why	What you'd like to improve and why
Some students not engaging. They are present but their cameras are off and they don't seem to contribute...	N/A	<p>Any suggestions? If you have experienced this, what has worked for you?</p> <p>Do the students whose cameras are off actually have cameras? One of mine doesn't. There might also be the issue of bandwidth. Nominating students to answer questions has helped with participation. Not being willing to take part in a large group setting is an issue generally (with students from East Asia), so nomination helps bring in those who might not naturally contribute otherwise.</p> <p>Ditto to this comment – picking students by name is very important. I've caught a couple of slackers out who sign in to the classroom, leave their camera off and then just go off.. They've realised I do this now and it seems to have helped.</p> <p>I agree with the above, and sometimes tell people to switch their cameras on. I often check that they can see me, so that they can judge the point they are making by my non-verbal reaction. I hope that this will encourage them to remain visible.</p>

Figure 2: Extract from shared document on webinars

This process led to much constructive discussion and sharing of practices, both within the document and at team meetings (and a team blog post: Heath et al., 2020). Teachers were able to analyse their own practices and those of others, which is an important activity in professional development (Klentschy, 2005). Many reported that this had been useful, and that they were able to lead webinars more effectively as a result.

### Peer observation and feedback

A third solution was to use peer observation and feedback to illuminate good practices for communication with students, which took place through Teams channels. Early in the course, we had carried out ‘buzz’ (brief, light-touch) observations of teachers’ channels as part of our department’s quality assurance procedures. One area for improvement that came to light from this process, as well as early student feedback, was that teachers’ communication with students on their channels was sometimes unclear. Therefore, we asked teachers to ‘buzz’ each other’s channels, recording their observations in a shared document (without naming those observed).

Your name	Good practice – What did you see that you would like to emulate in your own practice?	Areas to review – What did you see that you thought could be done differently/ more effectively?
(Anon)	<p>Putting important words in instructions in bold.</p> <p>Explaining to students the ‘whyness’ of activities.</p> <p>Specifying how long students should spend on activities.</p> <p>Lots of encouraging words.</p>	<p>Sometimes tutor replies are a separate entry and may not reach or be understood by the student.</p> <p>A few posts need to be more explicit (e.g. with headings).</p> <p>I think it’s better for students to get used to accessing documents from Files than from Posts – if they are organised logically in Files, they should be easier to find over time.</p>
(Anon)	<p>Nice friendly posts thanking students for their participation.</p> <p>Good use of the files section to store ppts and other useful docs in the group channel.</p> <p>I liked the news stories and items of interest that were posted. However, these may not be accessible in China without a VPN.</p>	<p>Some posts could have been more clearly labelled with class number e.g. ALL as well as the task.</p> <p>Tip for myself: look into the webcam when recording or speaking to students rather than the centre of the screen. It’s really hard to do and I am still no good at it!!</p>
(Anon)	<p>Instructions clearly set out, with nicely incorporated links to relevant docs e.g. <a href="#">Amsberry</a>.</p> <p>Useful tips for students in their initial week – reassuring language / guidance.</p> <p>Effective welcome posts to which the students responded well.</p> <p>Clear instructions on follow up to Webinars / thanking students for their input during webinar.</p> <p>Students well informed on what they need to be doing next – helps to make sense of what you are doing yourself!</p>	<p>Possible over-embedding of IL tasks on channels (ie. lecture videos), when we could be steering SS towards CNB content area in order to develop autonomy / prepare / learn at their own pace.</p> <p>Good idea to use the @ tags when addressing a group, as it is easy for posts to pass by unnoticed.</p>

Figure 3: Examples of (anonymised) comments from teachers’ peer observations

Teachers were asked to read the feedback and reflect on their own practices, with time set aside for discussion in a meeting. As shown in Figure 4, the process brought to light different

approaches: one teacher recommended sharing documents with students through the Files tab on Teams, while another suggested steering students towards Class Notebook.

Teachers were able to observe in practice alternative approaches that they may not have considered, which is an important opportunity in teacher development (Klentschy, 2005), and discuss the affordances and (dis)advantages of each approach. It was apparent from the document and discussions that many teachers intended to apply approaches that they had observed in their own practice.

Although as module leaders we facilitated this peer observation process, we did not intervene or contribute. Asking teachers to review each other's practices allowed us to support this teacher development "from the side" (Vangrieken et al., 2017, p.53) rather than from the top, as with the initial buzz observations. While we instigated the process, we gave teachers ownership of the feedback document, recognising their authority (Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008) and the fact that their feedback was equally valuable to ours. This seemed particularly important at the time, as some decisions made in the race to bring the course online, such as the centralised sharing of materials with students, had taken some autonomy away from teachers.

Teaching online leads to practices that would usually be 'invisible' becoming visible. For example, rather than communicating with students through private emails, teachers create posts in their group's semi-public channel, which can be viewed by other teachers and students. Many teachers experienced increased pressure due to this greater visibility and, indeed, more than one reported feeling like they were "working in a goldfish bowl". Consequently, although most feedback on the peer observation process was positive, a small number of teachers had reservations.

While these reservations are understandable, the increased visibility that is inherent and inevitable on most online platforms can be viewed as an affordance, allowing us to more easily open the door to our practice to our colleagues. If we wish to build CoPs in which we work cooperatively to improve our collective practices, then perhaps we need to 'de-privatise' our practice (Newmann, 1996, cited in Vangrieken et al., 2017, p.49) and "open up" our classrooms, on campus or online, in order to create a "climate of openness" (Vangrieken et al., p.54). Thus, all teachers will gain opportunities to improve their practice, to the benefit of their students.

### Impact on students

#### *Promoting a collaborative CoP: Impact on students*

It is difficult to measure the impact of our collaborative practices on students. Feedback from teachers, however, highlights two areas: the impact of teachers' increased confidence in using technology on their students, and the consistency of students' experiences on the course. Firstly, teachers commented that "it was beneficial to students when teachers appeared to know what they were doing" and that their feeling confident "helped... students to adapt easily to the learning environment." Secondly, teachers commented that sharing practices "helped level the playing field" and provided "a more consistent experience to students", with those whose teachers' technological knowledge was less developed gaining most.

#### *Direct sharing of good practices: Impact on students*

End-of-course student feedback on webinars was much more positive than mid-term feedback, suggesting that teachers' practices had improved. We cannot know how much this improvement was due to the direct sharing of practices, but feedback from teachers on this exercise was positive, with the majority of those surveyed stating that it was useful. For example, teachers "gained insight into what could be done differently" and webinars "became more productive" as a result of the activity. As the number and length of webinars was limited due to practical constraints, it was paramount that these sessions had maximal impact on students' learning.

#### *Peer observation and feedback: Impact on students*

There was an observable improvement in communication on teachers' Teams channels over the course, with communication becoming clearer and channels more "user-friendly", according to one teacher. It is possible that a gradual improvement would have occurred even without the peer observations. Nonetheless, all teachers surveyed reported benefitting from observing each other's channels. One teacher commented that it was useful to "see a variety of different approaches" and that the process "helped reinforce what we were doing well in addition to picking up on areas for improvement". End-of-course student feedback on this aspect of the course was much improved. More than ever, when teaching online, clear communication is essential for students' learning experience.

### Recommendations and conclusion

Writing in October 2020, early in our third term of online teaching, we are in a very different position. We have mostly moved on from ERT, having had time to reflect on and share the

lessons learnt from two terms of online instruction, and our department's Digital Education Leads have developed excellent, thorough technological inductions for both staff and students. Nonetheless, the three solutions applied in our first term are still relevant. For example, although the induction shows teachers how to use platforms, they need further support to understand how to use them to teach effectively (Harris, Mishra and Koehler, 2009). There is still much to be gained, therefore, from building a collaborative CoP, in which teachers support each other and share good practices; facilitating the sharing of effective practices when a collective area for improvement is identified; and encouraging teachers to observe and learn from each other.

Finally, while we were engaged in ERT, we were not able to “take full advantage of the affordances and possibilities of the online format” (Hodges et al., 2020, no pagination). Now that the situation has improved, we have the opportunity to explore ways of extending the online sharing of support and good practices regarding technological knowledge to also include content and pedagogical knowledge. Online teaching affords us the ability to more easily share what we have learnt with each other, which can often be a challenge when working offline (Klentschy, 2005). Indeed, observing colleagues' practice and sharing resources has become “accessible and effortless” (Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot, 2020, p.3). If teachers regularly and routinely share all three types of knowledge, this could have a great impact on students' learning.

*I would like to thank my AEPS3 co-lead, Denise de Pauw, and all of the teaching team for their hard work and support in making the course a success, despite the challenging circumstances.*

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## Reconceptualising the conference: An imaginative, inclusive and innovative approach to CPD in the digital age

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### **Setting the scene for the innovative practice designed and delivered**

As practitioners and academics, continuous professional development (CPD) is the element of our practice which enables us to examine and innovate our teaching. Through exploration of current pedagogic developments, we strive to better understand our learners. However, the reality is that busy pre-sessional courses and precarious contracts interfere with engagement in CPD and push practitioner growth down the agenda for many institutions. The consequences of this impact not only practitioner and disciplinary growth but teaching quality too. In response to these challenges, 2018 saw the first one-day Language Centre Summer Conference, creating a much-needed space for pedagogic engagement, professional exploration and the dissemination of current language teaching research for practitioners and professionals across the University. Whilst the 2019 conference adopted a similar approach to the previous year, owing to the global pandemic, 2020 posed a different set of challenges. Unphased by our new working paradigm, the 2020 conference moved online, embracing new modes of discussion and knowledge building. The remainder of this narrative will outline our approach to this challenge, the impact on students, and recommendations for other institutions wishing to adopt a similar approach.

### **Stage-by-stage account of the solution**

Delivering a fully online conference was achieved by making adaptations to use the online platforms in the most effective ways and to maximise the quality of experience for delegates. Firstly, the length of the conference was increased; it became a 'slow' conference which ran over three weeks, rather than a one-day event. The conference utilised three types of interaction: asynchronous presentations/ asynchronous discussion via posts/ live plenary sessions and panel discussion which included some live Q&A. The online platforms used were Microsoft Teams and Zoom (see welcome message in Figure 1). The Team was used to interact asynchronously and post the pre-recorded presentations. Zoom was used for the two live plenary sessions and the final panel.

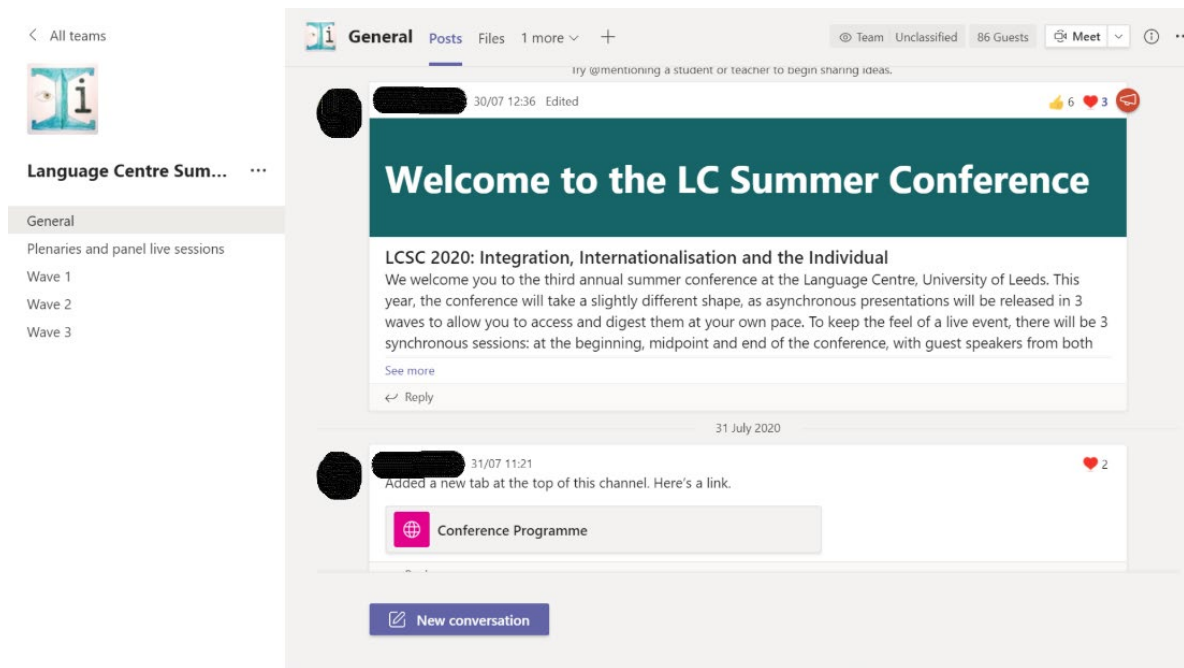


Figure 1: Image of LC slow conference Team welcome message.

Before the start of the conference, we designed and distributed a programme containing information on the set-up as well as details of the live sessions and presentations. The programme was designed on Microsoft Sway and integrated into the Team (see Figure 2).

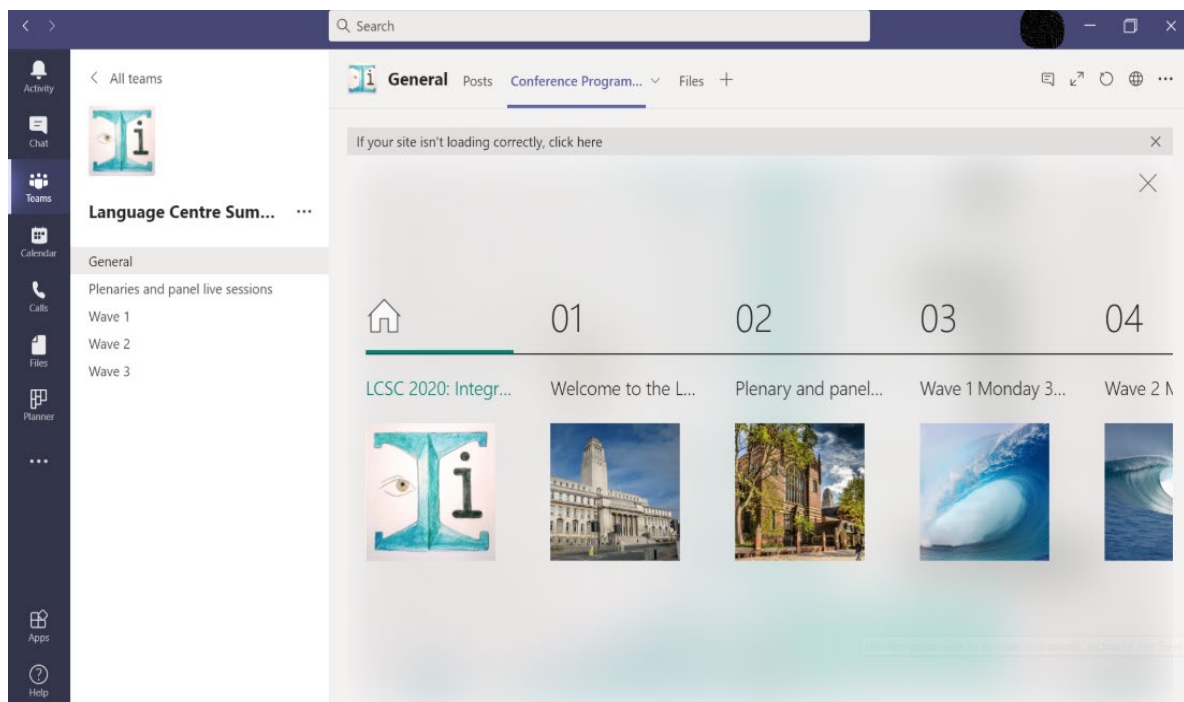


Figure 2: Image of LC slow conference Team programme on Sway.

The 'slow' conference began with a plenary session entitled *Theory and practice in EAP-bridging the divide to include and empower practitioners*, presented live by Dr. Laetitia Monbec based at the National University of Singapore. This event had the intended effect of bringing the delegates together at the start of the three weeks and creating a sense of community online. Following the session was a Q&A which continued online on the Language Centre Summer Conference Team as asynchronous discussion via posts.

After the opening plenary, the first 'wave' began on the Team. There were three waves in total containing the asynchronous presentations which were divided equally between the three waves. These presentations were recorded and submitted to use by the presenters. We received and accepted twenty-one presentations for the conference, making seven per wave. The theme of the conference was 'The Three I's': Integration, Internationalisation and the Individual. Although there were three parts to our conference theme, we chose not to divide the waves according to the three I's because we didn't want to encourage delegates to only engage with one or two ideas. Mixing up the presentations meant the topics, under the sub-themes of Integration, Internationalisation and the Individual, were exposed to those delegates who may have previously only focussed on one of the areas.

Presentation topics were wide-reaching, and many practical aspects of the online teaching environment were addressed: assessing and tutoring; using software; utilising blogs; providing extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, linguistic topics included but were not limited to, learner identity of Study Abroad students; migrant EAL learners; linguistic diversity in L2 learners and EAP theory into practice. The waves had their own channels in both the Team (Wave 1, Wave 2 and Wave 3) and in Microsoft Stream where the videos were stored and linked through to the Team, enabling a consistent and accessible interface.

Following a week of asynchronous discussion on the Team around the opening plenary and Wave 1 presentations, we released the Wave 2 presentations to the Team. The presentations were given their own posts which we hope encouraged discussion via replies underneath the posts. Halfway through the second week we had the second plenary session: *EAP and expressing critical thinking through text: theory and pedagogy*, presented live on Zoom by Dr. Ian Bruce at Waikato University in New Zealand. The plenary session was recorded and uploaded to the Team, as was the opening plenary. Asynchronous discussion was encouraged under the Teams post (see Figure 3).

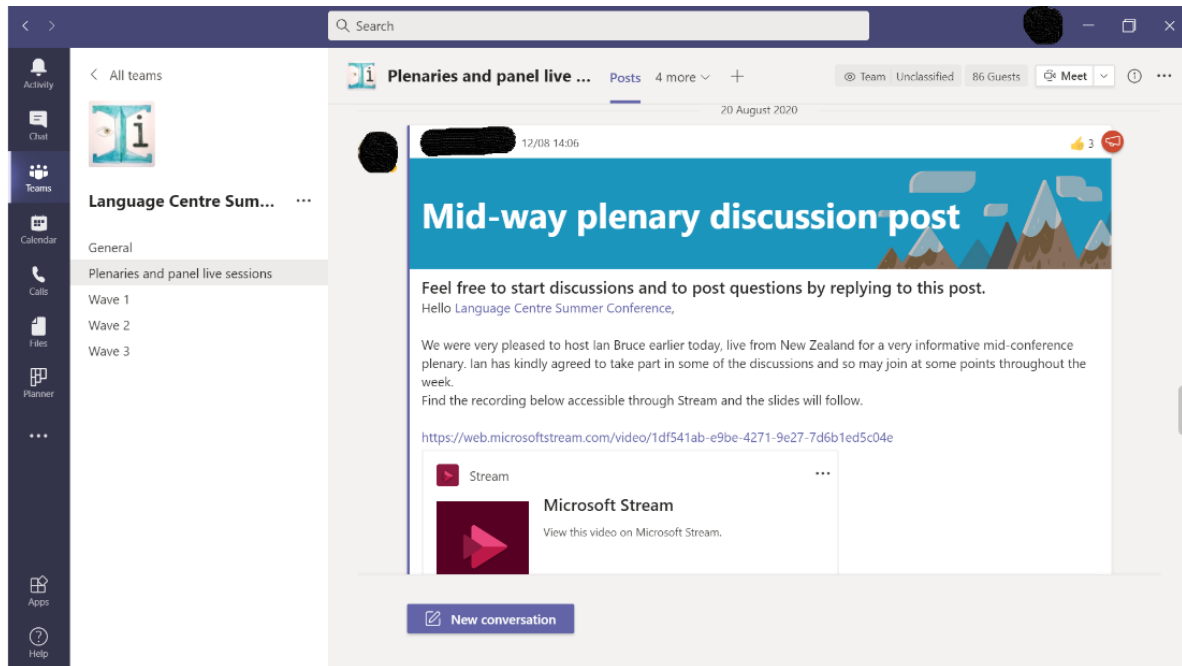


Figure 3: Image of LC slow conference Team plenary discussion post.

The final week saw the release of the Wave 3 presentations and ended on the final day with a live panel discussion consisting of four members and a Chair. The panel discussion brought together staff members from the Language Centre and the wider faculty. The panel members, chair and organising committee met up prior to the live event to discuss the topics to be addressed during the live discussion. The panel members were asked, at the initial stages of the conference organisation, to follow the events of the slow conference, give their reflections and pick out any highlights or points of resonance.

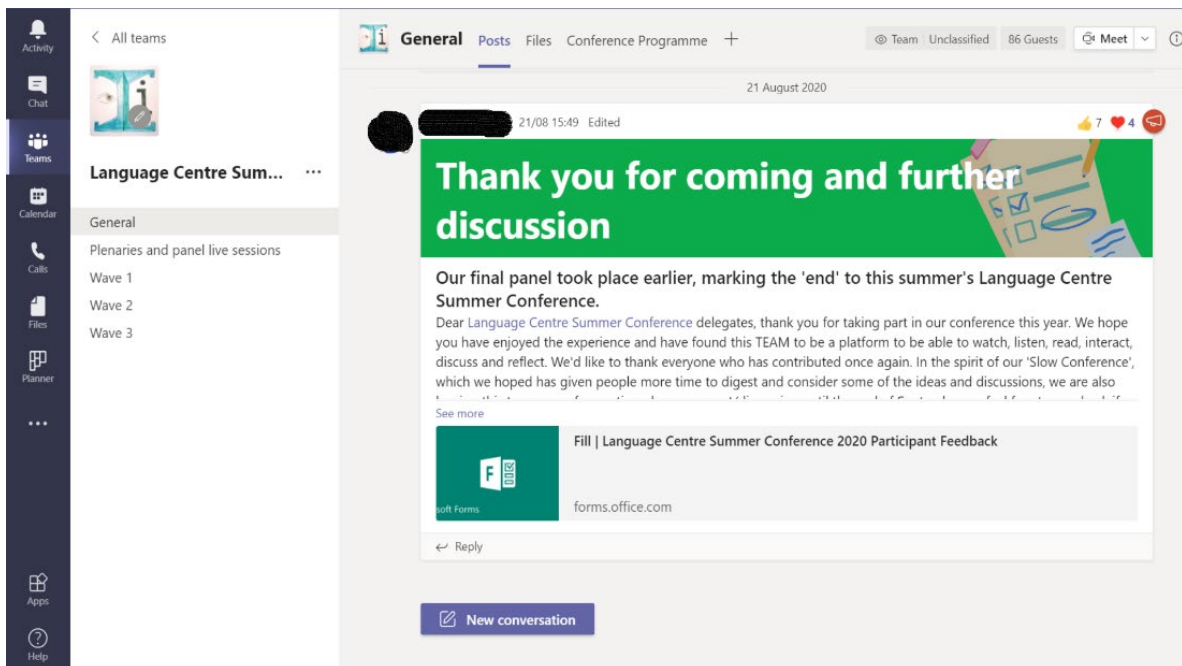


Figure 4: Image of LC slow conference Team closing message and feedback form.

At the end of the conference, we requested participant feedback via an online form, which will be used to inform planning for the 2021 conference (see Figure 4). The conference Team remains open and accessible to delegates, following requests for it to remain open as delegates wanted more time to engage with the content around their workload. Another aspect of accessibility was allowing access to delegates external to the University of Leeds. Zoom was used to accommodate the numbers, but we also created a private YouTube channel where the recordings of the plenaries, presentations and panel were stored. This was because Stream is not available to those outside the University of Leeds. The YouTube channel was linked through the Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching (CELT) website which is linked to our School of Languages, Cultures and Societies.

### **Impact on colleagues and students**

This section will explore how participants, both internal and external, engaged with our slow conference format. Although empirical or conclusive evidence of the impact on student education is not available due to the recency of the event, we aim to illustrate participants' perspectives and delve into ways in which this provision could have wider-reaching effects on student education during this academic year and beyond. One of the benefits of the 'slow conference' concept and format means that there are many more affordances for reflection when engaging in such an exchange of ideas and experiences, compared to an intense face-to-face conference schedule. There is also the chance to engage with more material, rather than having to choose between presentations. We interweave practitioners' testimonies with our narrative here. These were collected within three weeks of the final panel, allowing participants the time and space necessary to reflect on engagement and exchanges of knowledge both during and after the event.

The online conference was more than a response to the situation we found ourselves in due to the pandemic and the closure of campus: it was a fully reconceptualised event. During the three-week period many participants actively exchanged ideas around the pre-recorded presentations, while others engaged without contributing publicly. It was clear that colleagues were collegiately curious and active in communicating about practice and theory. With consent, we collected several perspectives on colleagues' engagement with the conference and the potential impact this has had on their teaching practice and scholarship, and therefore on the potential impact on student education.

Understandably, respondents commented on the difficulty of measuring effects of the conference on student education:

It is notoriously difficult, not to say impossible, to measure impacts on student education. I am sure that tutors will have been influenced, stimulated or provoked in some way that may have some kind of an effect, lasting or otherwise, on their practice, perhaps not immediately.

However, some participants indicated practical outcomes for teaching practice, as a result of being involved in the conference, even if they did not visibly contribute on the posts:

I made a note of references which I would like to follow up and I bought a resource. It will hopefully have an impact on my practice which in time should have an impact on student education.

Furthermore, some comments revealed that the influence of the conference on the teaching culture of the centre was notable, which can have indirect and longer-term effects on both scholarship and thus student education:

The practical papers can easily impact practitioners' practices, but those that address scholarship are also very important in building a teaching culture that impacts student education.

Perhaps to extend on the idea of a dynamic teaching culture, the following comment identifies the format as a move away from traditional one-day events. It focuses on new potential for eventual student impact through a larger shift in beliefs and possibly practices:

I think the format ("slow" + an opportunity to engage in written discussions) is conducive to a more reflective approach than "one-day" events, which means it is more likely to influence practitioners' beliefs and/or practices'.

The survey prompted participants to reflect particularly on the effects they feel the conference had on their own scholarship and teaching practice, and how this could further improve student education. Some referred to the affirming nature of the conference contributions, particularly for newer or novice EAP practitioners. This conference helped to build a sense of community normally created on campus which was absent this year due to our online working. While module leads built communities within their teams, the conference was the only place where colleagues from all courses could come together to explore ideas around scholarship and practice: a vital component of our summer pre-session staff experience. A participant commented that, with regards to teaching practice, the conference: "re-affirmed and supported my approach whilst also informing ideas for future practice." Further, that the conference: "inspired some innovative ideas that I'm going to introduce to my teaching."



However, despite many positive comments on the effects of the conference for practice and scholarship, it is also vital to consider limitations. Even though the slow conference was designed to address the problems with time constraints, there remained a handful of comments relating to lack of impact on teaching due to the inability to engage with the discussion within the timeframe. Conversely, from a contributor viewpoint, this extra time to access presentations has sometimes caused extra anxiety:

Both the presentation and managing my Q&A post was way more time-consuming than I would have wanted it to be. I felt very conscious about my video and written comments just staying there, forever, black on white. I kept overthinking it and wondering whether I made any mistakes...

We feel that this may be a point to consider in our recommendations: perhaps the choice of shorter time limit for availability of presentations is necessary. Clearly, there is some refining required in terms of the amount of time available to access posts in this context. While some contributors commented on the opportunities this brought for engagement with other members of staff they would not otherwise have met, others felt too exposed. It is important to consider the situation of each presenter and more choices could be offered in terms of 'presenting'.

Overall, survey respondents referred to the indirect nature of impact on student education. For example, in response to the question '*Do you think there will be any impact on student education as a result of the online conference?*'

Yes, I think there will be. Sharing good practice with colleagues is always beneficial and encourages trying new ways, collaborating with others, and seeing things in new light.

Others commented on learning about new approaches and practices in teaching, which could have a direct effect on syllabus design, lesson preparation and lesson delivery. It is clear from survey comments that participants feel that there will be changes and considerations made to their teaching practice as a result of sharing, discussing and learning from the slow conference.

### **Recommendations for other institutions**

*Be bold:* Fewer practical constraints means unlimited options. Approach geographically unfeasible speakers and invite any interested practitioner.

*Be realistic:* Capacity to engage in online discussion is not limitless, so consider how delegates might realistically interact with the conference.

*Be prepared:* Test platforms thoroughly and prepare for delegates with a range of technological setups, including limited connectivity.



*Be dynamic:* Ad hoc discussion can be lost when events move online so keep momentum going through discussion prompts, polls and strategically placed discussion facilitators to help connect themes and ideas for delegates.

*Be inclusive:* Experiences and perceptions will vary with some delegates uncomfortable posting on discussion boards (e.g. precarious staff) feeling their contributions may be 'judged'. Consider addressing this directly to reassure delegates that contributions are not used to evaluate them.

### **A closing section considering the situation and the connection with student education**

Exposure to differing ideas, research, and scholarship can provoke reflective thoughts about one's practice which may lead to positive development, or at least a consideration of one's teaching. Presenters taking part in this slow conference were expected to present their ideas, research or scholarship in an articulate and structured manner; this deep consideration of the optimal way of communicating their content will have been a beneficial exercise for them and may have provided them with reflective moments in which to consider their teaching.

Participants in the slow conference, even those engaged in a very minimal way, will have found the presentations, plenaries and panel to be a source of reflection and development, however small. Even if they felt irritation, at least there is consideration.

The effect of a CPD event such as the Language Centre slow conference on student education will always be indirect due to the contextual nature of this event and subsequent collection of participant testimonies. It is challenging to make a causal link between a CPD event and positive student education practices. Participants in our slow conference may not 'feel' the effect of the content they have discovered for months or even years, perhaps they will be confronted by a similar idea at another conference and the reappraisal of the idea will instigate a positive, developmental change in their teaching.

The Language Centre slow conference is situated as an integral CPD and scholarship event alongside other events, including the two previous conferences in 2018 and 2019, and centres showcasing inspirational scholarship, such as CELT within the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies. We welcome discussion from colleagues interested in the potential for 'slow conferences' and how these can impact on practice and scholarship. We look forward to continuing this narrative in the coming months and years.

